Aide-de-Camp's Library



Rashtrapati Bhavan
New Delhi

Accn. No. 1223

Call No. VIII (d) - B

Little Reviews Anthology

By the same author

LITTLE REVIEWS (1914-43)

Little Reviews Anthology

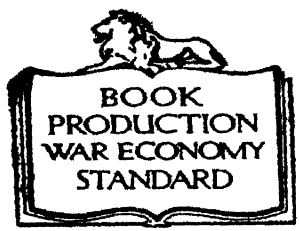
edited by

DENYS VAL BAKER

London

George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

First published in 1943



This Book is produced in Complete Conformity with the Authorized Economy Standards

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Printed in Great Britain by C Tinling & Co, Ltd., Liverpool, London and Prescot

INTRODUCTION

LITTLE reviews, small literary magazines, form an integral part of contemporary literature. The fact that nearly all of them are privately sponsored, and hence free of outside influences, makes it possible for them to publish any and every type of writing. They tend to reflect current movements in writing more accurately than the mass-appeal popular magazines, whose contents must conform to certain standards and avoid offending against public "taste," advertisers' policies, and so on. It is in the pages of little reviews that almost every form of new and experimental writing first makes an appearance. D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley and many other famous writers, in the past three decades, have first attracted attention through publication of their work in various little reviews. In the same way, it is in the little reviews of to-day, of the early 1940's, that we are most likely to find writing that is most vital and alive, in particular, new writing by writers who are beginning to make their mark.

This is an anthology of the best writing which has appeared in the little reviews and literary magazines of Britain since the outbreak of war. Owing to the rather long period covered (nearly four years), much has had to be left out that merited inclusion; in future, when it is hoped the anthology will be an annual publication, this difficulty will not arise. At the same time it is fair to claim that here, more than in most anthologies (those which are confined to a particular class of writers, such as members of the Forces) is the reader presented with a really comprehensive cross-section of contemporary writing. Little reviews are of all shapes, sizes and flavours; hardly one has the same outlook or presentation as another; one publishes the type of writing known as "realism," another contains highly imaginative prose of a poetic nature.

A selection of writing taken from such a variety of magazines cannot but give a very representative picture of modern literary trends.

A few points of explanation may help the reader to visualise the anthology as a whole. First, the term " little review " is defined here as covering specifically *literary* magazines—for instance, *Horizon* and *Kingdom Come* are little reviews, but the *New Statesman* or *Tribune* belong to a somewhat different category, since they are primarily political papers, with literary *sections*. Second, since the editorial contents of little reviews cover articles and criticism, as well as stories and poems, I have attempted to give equal space to all four forms of writing. Third, preference has deliberately been given to younger and newer writers, although many established writers are also included. Fourth, while some reviews are inevitably better represented, numerically, than others, every effort has been made to give every review a fair showing. Fifth, so far as possible I have attempted to select items which, in addition to their individual qualifications, are also representative of the general editorial outlook and contents of the particular magazine from which they are taken. Lastly, the fact that one or two little reviews are not represented in this volume is due solely to the refusal of their editors to grant permission for the reproduction of contributions, the writers of which were quite willing to co-operate—an attitude which it is sincerely hoped will have been modified by the time another volume is in preparation.

I have to thank the editors of *Horizon*, *New Writing*, *Our Time*, *Now*, *Poetry* (*London*), *Poetry Quarterly*, *Poetry Review*, *The Bell*, *New Vision*, *Indian Writing*, *Wind and the Rain*, *Oasis*, *Opus*, *Scythe* (formerly *Townsman*) and *Seven*—for their co-operation and permission to use material which first appeared in the pages of their magazines. Since one of the objects of this anthology is to draw greater public attention to little reviews and the valuable function they perform, I would

particularly refer the reader to the bibliography at the end of the book. Finally, acknowledgements are due to Martin Secker and Warburg, Ltd., for permission to reprint " Stormy Day," by W. R. Rodgers ; to Faber and Faber, Ltd., for permission to reprint " The Mother and the Child," by Vernon Watkins, from *The Ballad of the Mari Lwyd* ; to Hogarth Press, Ltd., for permission to reproduce " Fletcher," by Roy Fuller ; and to George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., for permission to reprint " Lager," by Alan Rook, " Evening in Cambridge," by George Woodcock, and " The Constant North," by J. F. Hendry.

THE EDITOR.

CONTENTS

Page

INTRODUCTION—The Editor v

STORIES

THE RING (*Bell*)—Bryan MacMahon 13
EXILES IN KHAKI (*Oasis*)—Keith Vaughan . . 18
SHAVING THROUGH THE BLITZ (*New Writing*)—
"Fanfarlo" (G. W. Stonier) 28
FAMINE (*Indian Writing*)—S. Raja Ratnam . . . 36
A MAN ABOUT THE HOUSE (*Horizon*)—Fred Urquhart . 41
Y LIST (*New Writing*)—J. Maclaren Ross . . . 48

POEMS

ALL DAY IT HAS RAINED—Alun Lewis (*Horizon*) . 66
STORMY DAY (*Horizon*)—W. R. Rodgers . . . 67
ELEGY ON A HILL (*Poetry*)—John Hall . . . 68
LAMENT (*Poetry*)—G. S. Fraser 69
POEM (*Poetry*)—Tom Scott 70
THE ARMOURED VALLEY (*New Writing*)—Laurie Lee . 71
STRANGE IS THE WISDOM (*Poetry Review*)—Emanuel
Litvinoff 72
LAGER (*Poetry*)—Alan Rook 73
POEM (*Opus*)—Robin Atthill 74
THE FROST WAS HARD (*Bell*)—M. J. Craig . . . 75
OXFORD, A REVISITING (*Oasis*)—John Bate . . 76
COUNTRY TOWN IN WAR-TIME (*Oasis*)—Vic Turner . 76
EVENING IN CAMBRIDGE (*New*)—George Woodcock . 77
THE TARN (*Poetry Quarterly*)—Norman Nicholson . . 78
PRACTICAL BALLAD (*Townsman*)—Ronald Duncan . 80

STORIES

Page

THE WALL (*Horizon*)—William Sansom . . . 81
LAND-GIRL (*Horizon*)—Diana Gardner 85
FLETCHER (*Now*)—Roy Fuller 93
ALL ONE HAPPY FAMILY (*Our Time*)—Beatrix Lehmann 100
THE SOLDIER (*Opus*)—Denys Val Baker . . . 108

POEMS

I HOLD YOUR FACE (*Poetry*)—Stephen Coates . . 116
LINES WRITTEN IN AN AIR RAID (*Poetry*)—
Francis Scarfe 116
SLEEP—Ian L. Serraillier (*Poetry Quarterly*) . . . 117
SONNET (*Oasis*)—John Bayliss 117
DEATHS AND ENTRANCES (*Horizon*)—Dylan Thomas . 118
PRIVATE POEM (*Townsman*)—Lawrence Olson . . 119
AMOR FATI (*Poetry*)—David Gascoyne 120
THE MOTHER AND CHILD (*Horizon*)—Vernon Watkins 120
THE GLANCE (*Poetry*)—Anne Ridler 121
MY FOREHEAD UNSIGNED (*Bell*)—Patrick Madden . 122
THE CONSTANT NORTH (*Poetry*)—J. F. Hendry . . 122

ESSAYS

THE CREATIVE ARTS IN OUR TIME (*New Writing*)—
Stephen Spender 123
THE MISSION OF POETRY (*Poetry*)—M. J. Tambimuttu. 135
THE INDIVIDUAL IN LITERATURE (*Opus*)—Derek
D. Stanford 140
CONTEMPORARY MUSICAL COMPOSERS (*Oasis*)—
Geoffrey Cuming 148
SOCIAL CONVENTIONS OF THE ANGLO-
AMERICAN FILM (*New Vision*)—Alex. Comfort . . 154

POEMS

Page

BETWEEN THE BARRIERS (*Poetry Review*)—Henry Treece 167
SPEAKS FROM THE CLOUD (*Now*)—Nicholas Moore . 168
FIRE NO DESIRE (*Poetry Quarterly*)—Wrey Gardiner . 169
EASY NOW IS ENVY (*Opus*)—F. Buchanan . . . 170
PLAINT OF THE WORKING-MEN (*Bell*)—Roy McFadden 171
PATTERN (*Seven*)—Sydney D. Tremayne. . . . 172
SHOP WINDOW (*New Writing*)—Terence Tiller . . 173
WHEN IT IS FINISHED (*New Vision*)—Ian Fletcher . 175
PARIS, 1942 (*Our Time*)—Honor Arundel . . . 176
BOLGERRAN AT THE BARBER'S (*New Writing*)—
Lawrence Little 177
THE SIRENS (*Our Time*)—John Manifold . . . 177
CHESSMAN ASSOCIATIONS (*Now*)—Keidrych Rhys . 179
THE ALIEN WORLD (*Poetry Quarterly*)—Robert Greacen . 180

CRITICISM

D. H. LAWRENCE (*Opus*)—Dion Byngham. . . 181
ALDOUS HUXLEY (*Now*)—D. S. Savage . . . 186
GRAHAM GREENE (*Horizon*)—A. Calder-Marshall. . 197
R. M. RILKE (*Wind and the Rain*)—Dallas Kenmare . 205
T. S. ELIOT (*Poetry*)—George Orwell 212
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF LITTLE REVIEWS . . 220

I

THE RING

BRYAN MacMAHON

I SHOULD like you to have known my grandmother. She was my mother's mother, and as I remember her she was a widow with a warm farm in the Kickham Country in Tipperary. Her land was on the southern slope of a hill and there it drank in the sun which, to me, seemed always to be balanced on the teeth of the Galtees. Each year I spent the greater part of my summer holidays at my grandmother's place. It was a great change for me to leave our home in a bitter seacoast village in Kerry and visit my grandmother's. Why, man, the grass gone to waste on a hundred yards of the roadside in Tipperary was as much as you'd find in a dozen of our sea-poisoned fields. I always thought it a pity to see all that fine grass go to waste by the verge of the road. I think so still.

Although my uncle Con was married in the farm my grandmother held the whip hand. At the particular time I am trying to recall the first child was in the cradle. (Ah! how time has galloped away; that child is now a nun in a Convent on the Seychelles Islands). My uncle Con's wife, my Aunt Annie, was a gentle, delicate girl who was only charmed in herself to have somebody to assume the responsibility of the place. Which was just as well indeed considering the nature of woman my grandmother was. Since that time when her husband's horse had walked unto the farmyard unguided with my grandfather, Martin Dermody, dead in the body of the car, her heart had turned to stone in her breast. Small wonder to that turning, since she was left with six young children—five girls and one boy, my uncle Con. But she faced the world bravely and did well by them all. Ah! but she was hard, main hard.

Once at a race meeting I picked up a jockey's crop. When I balanced it on my palm it reminded me of my grandmother. Once I had a twenty-two pound salmon laced to sixteen feet of

Castleconnell greenheart: the rod reminded me of my grandmother. True, like crop and rod, she had an element of flexibility, but like them there was no trace of fragility. Now after all these years I cannot recall her person clearly; to me she is but something tall and dark and austere. But lately I see her character with a greater clarity. Now I understand things that puzzled me when I was a boy. Towards me she displayed a certain black affection. Oh, but I made her laugh warmly once. That was when I told her of the man who had stopped me on the road beyond the lime-kiln and asked me if I were a grandson of Martin Dermody's. Inflating with a shy pride, I had told him that I was. He then gave me a shilling and said: "Maybe, you're called Martin after your grandfather?" "No," I said, "I'm called Con after my uncle Con." It was then my grandmother had laughed a little warmly. But my uncle Con caught me under the armpits, tousled my hair and said I was a clever Kerry rascal.

The solitary occasion on which I remember her to have shown emotion was remarkable. Maybe remarkable isn't the proper word; obscene would be closer to the mark. Obscene I would have thought of it then, had I known the meaning of the word. To-day I think it merely pathetic. How was it that it all started? Yes, there I was with my bare legs trailing from the heel of a loaded hay-float. I was watching the broad silver parallels we were leaving in the clean aftergrass. My uncle Con was standing in the front of the float guiding the mare. Drawing in the hay to the hay-shed we were. Already we had a pillar and a half of the hay-shed filled. My grandmother was up on the hay forking the lighter trusses. The servant-boy was handling the heavier forkfuls. A neighbour was throwing it up to them.

When the float stopped at the hayshed I noticed that something was amiss. For one thing the man on the hay was idle, as indeed was the man on the ground. My grandmother was on the ground looking at the hay with cold calculating eyes. She turned to my uncle Con.

"Draw in no more hay, Con," she said. "I've lost my wedding ring."

"Where? In the hay?" he queried.

"Yes, in the hay."

"But I thought you had a keeper?"

"I've lost the keeper, too. My hands are getting thin."

"The story could be worse," he commented.

My grandmother did not reply for a little while. She was eyeing the stack with enmity.

"'Tis in that half-pillar," she said at last. "I must look for it."

"You've a job before you, mother," said uncle Con.

She spoke to the servant boy and the neighbour. "Go down and shake out those couple of pikes at the end of the Bog Meadow," she ordered. "They're heating in the centre."

"Can't we be drawing in to the idle pillar, mother?" my uncle Con asked gently.

"No, Con," she answered. "I'll be putting the hay from the middle pillar there."

The drawing-in was over for the day. That was about four o'clock in the evening. Before she tackled the half pillar my grandmother went down on her hands and knees and started to search the loose hay in the idle pillar. She searched wisp by wisp, even sop by sop. My uncle Con beckoned to me to come away. Anyway, we knew she'd stop at six o'clock. "Six to six" was her motto for working hours. She never broke that rule.

That was a Monday evening. On Tuesday we offered to help—my uncle Con and I. She was down on her knees when we asked her. "No, no," she said abruptly. Then, by way of explanation when she saw we were crestfallen, "You see, if we didn't find it I'd be worried that ye didn't search as carefully as ye should and I'd have no peace of mind until I had searched it all over again." So she worked hard all day breaking off only for her meals and stopping sharp at six o'clock.

By Wednesday evening she had made a fair gap in the hay but had found no ring. Now and again during the day we used to go down to see if she had any success. She was very wan in the face when she stopped in the evening.

On Thursday morning her face was still more strained and drawn. She seemed reluctant to leave the rick even to take her meals. What little she ate seemed like so much dust in her mouth. We took down tea to her several times during the day.

By Friday the house was on edge. My uncle Con spoke guardedly to her at dinner-time. "This will set us back a graydle, mother," he said. "I know, son; I know, son; I know," was all she said in reply.

Saturday came and the strain was unenduarble. About three o'clock in the evening she found the keeper. We had been watching her in turns from the kitchen window. I remember my uncle's face lighting up and his saying, "Glory, she's found it!" But he drew a long sigh when she started burrowing feverishly again at the hay. Then we knew it was only the keeper. We didn't run out at all. We waited till she came in again at six o'clock. There were times between three and six when our three heads were together at the small window watching her. I was thinking she was like a mouse nibbling at a giant's loaf.

At six she came in and said, "I found the keeper." After her tea she couldn't stay still. She fidgeted around the kitchen for an hour or so. Then "Laws were made to be broken," said my grandmother with a brittle bravery and she stalked out to the hayshed. Again we watched her.

Coming on for dusk she returned and lighted a stable lantern and went back to resume her search. Nobody crossed her. We didn't say yes, aye or no to her. After a time my uncle Con took her heavy coat off the rack and went down and threw it across her shoulders. I was with him. "There's a touch of frost there to-night, mother," said my uncle Con.

We loitered for a while in the darkness outside the ring of

her lantern's light. But she resented our pitying eyes, so we went in. We sat around the big fire waiting—uncle Con, aunt Annie and I. That was the lonely waiting—without speaking—just as if we were waiting for a person to die or for a child to come into the world. Near twelve we heard her step on the cobbles. 'Twas typical of my grandmother that she placed the lantern on the ledge of the dresser and quenched the candle in it before she spoke to us:

"I found it," she said. The words dropped out of her drawn face.

"Get hot milk for my mother, Annie," said uncle Con, briskly.

My grandmother sat by the fire, a little to one side. Her face was as cold as death. I kept watching her like a hawk but her eyes didn't even flicker. The wedding ring was inside its keeper and my grandmother kept twirling it round and round with the fingers of her right hand.

Suddenly, as if ashamed of her fingers' betrayal, she hid her hands under her check apron. Then, unpredictably, the fists under the apron came up to meet her face and her face bent down to meet the fists in the apron. "Oh, Martin, Martin," she sobbed, and then she cried like the rain.

EXILES IN KHAKI

KEITH VAUGHAN

I

At six o'clock the guard's cane thwacks the taut canvas of the tent: Time to get up. It is pitch dark in the tent. No one moves, but everyone is immediately awake, weighing the agony of getting up against the penalty of remaining in the warm cocoon of blankets. The guard can be heard in the distance thrashing the canvas of the other tents. Presently a tremor passes through the tent like the disturbance of sediment at the bottom of a heated flask. Sleepy but emphatic curses break out. A hand emerges from its blanket and gropes for matches and lights a candle. When it is already late for breakfast everybody gets up together in a sudden mad scramble, cursing and shivering and fight their way to their clothes, burrowing into the heaped ruins of kit and blankets to find their belongings. Candles perched here and there precariously, in water-bottles, on bits of wire, like a Christmas tree, we fold up the blankets and palliasses, kneading them together into the regulation mould. With practice we get skilful at doing this without extinguishing the candles. We shake the dust and straw out of tin mugs and plates and crawl out through the openings. Renewed cursings as we disentangle the loops of our trousers from the tent hooks which every morning catch us and hoist us neatly back, and every morning we forget to avoid. Outside the moon rides full and clear and the torn banners of the night's clouds race across the sky. We start on our perilous journey over the dark, slippery mud and through the minefields of guy ropes and tent pegs. Black smoke pours from the chimneys of the cookhouse into the clean, sharp air. Faces blotched and creased with sleep line up with tin bowl and plate outside the dining tent. Orderlies, blanketed in steam, bring across the heavy dixies of tea and porridge. We shovel the hot stuff greedily into our cold

bodies, it is too dark to see what we are eating. We sit, pressed tight together along the benches, wrapped in scarves, leather jerkins, bending over the tin bowls and letting the steam pour over our faces, and thawing out our fingers on the mugs of tea. The tables are at all angles owing to the uneven ground. If anyone moves carelessly, eight mugs of tea slop over and a shining dark stream rushes down to the end of the table where the bread is piled. The forms are so close together that there is not room to pass down between them, so when the inside person wants to get out everyone else has to get up too. Breakfast is a quiet meal except for the continual press and surge of people. Nobody talks much; nobody wants to wake up more than necessary. The light from candles stuck with wax onto the table give an accidental, dramatic quality to everything; the deep, bronze glow of faces and the soft pewter-like sheen on plates and bowls and the dark, mysterious folds of the canvas ceiling. When we have finished, we dip our plates and bowls into a bath of luke-warm, greasy water which removes the larger particles of food and spreads out the rest in an even film of grease.

Sheeplike we pour through the narrow gate of the camp and fall in in the meadow which is the parade ground. There is always the sense of expectancy and excitement about the half-light before the sun rises; the excitement that attends all beginnings, although we know the exact contents of the day that follows. Invisible in the middle distance, the voice of the S.M. barks into the stillness. The line of hills takes up his words and throws them back. We fall in as a company, and fall out and fall in as sections and fall out, and fall in as working parties; two hundred dark figures scuffling about in the meadow and suddenly standing still. N.C.O.s walk briskly up and down the ranks and call the roll by the light of torches. The voice of the S.M. shouts and the N.C.O.s shout back the numbers. We stand about a long time while night and her colonies of clouds hurry from the sky and lemon-coloured light spreads across the East. The huge wheels of

the military machine get slowly under way. Then we march back through the gate we came in and out by another gate into the lane, slipping and splashing through the mud, churned to thick porous porridge by boots and the molar wheels of lorries. At the turn of the lane we pass a cottage with a white board offering stud dogs and hysteria powders. A little further on is the white house. It stands back off the lane, a high box hedge surround the gardens, a newly-painted green gate and jungle of rare bushes lie between its plain whitewashed façade and the lawn. Chintz curtains in the downstairs room are drawn back and a large china dog with gold ears fills most of the window. Behind the dog one can glimpse the stooping figure of a woman in a white apron and the lively flicker of a newly lighted fire. The light touches the rims of cups and teapot on the white-clothed table; the warm glow of something copper on the far inside wall and the lustre of gilt picture frames. Each morning, in the three seconds it takes to pass the window, we notice something new, some extra detail to add to the total impression. No one else is about at that hour; thin blue smoke blowing down from the chimney and the woman moving silently about the room, setting the day's beginnings in order.

Left, left, left right left. . . .

II

It was summer when we came. I remember the afternoon we arrived early in June. The roads white with dust, the sun high and hot and the air still fresh with Spring, the thin leaves, bright and shrill dancing over the shadows. We had marched eighteen miles over the plain, clothes stuck to our skin and the canvas webbing cut like hawsers into our shoulders. We filled the narrow roads with our long column of burning, dusty feet, the metallic ring and crunch breaking up the quiet afternoon. Nobody took much notice of us. A man drinking outside a pub turned his head and turned back again to his conversation. Perhaps a window or a door half opened, and a woman untying her apron, a hand at her

hair, smiled a distant, generalised smile, the automatic, surface, sentimental greeting to the "boys." A clutch of children attached themselves to us for a yard or two, staring up with wide open curiosity like flowers and ran back squealing into a cottage. Ahead of us went lorries with our stores, aggressively, impetuously, leaving the high banks and hedges shivering as they passed. A half mile out of the village on the green slope of a meadow in the crutch of two roads we set up our camp; erected tents, marquees, cookhouse, latrine; tore up the grass, levelled the ground, dug trenches, barricaded ourselves in with wire, posted sentries at the gates and settled down to our life of insect activity, private, sordid and self-supporting.

The village is like any other village, my village, your village; quiet, undistinguished and peacefully English. Remote from any beauty spot or haunt of tourists it has been unaccustomed to bother itself overmuch with affairs outside its own community. The church broods peacefully over its flock of grey tombs and the manor lies decently separated within its generous acreage of park. The social structure descends in order from these. Two or three old mansions, with large gardens and high hedges, rows of thatched cottages and some hovels of wood and corrugated iron attached to large hen-houses. Life follows its ordered daily round. The church clock strikes each hour, plotting the graph points for the day's activity. The war has made little outward impression. Some of the larger houses have been converted into officers' messes and convalescent homes. A brand new notice board has appeared alongside the tennis club with notices for the Home Guard and firewatchers. Official posters in heavy sanscript warning against the dangers of incendiary bombs have been posted on the weather-pitted doors of barns, eclipsing the garish announcements of a travelling circus. Two sandbags spill their contents outside the village school. The refuse basket by the war memorial is free of chocolate wrappings or cigarette cartons. The general stores displays in its windows only toilet paper, vinegar and bird-seed.

It is difficult, looking back, to remember the summer. The events of each day evaporated in their own heat and left behind no deposit in the memory. Each morning as the rising sun split up the mist into particles of blue and gold we started work. In groups of six, six man-power digging machines, we set a course through the steaming grass guided by the remote control of the corporal's voice, drew picks and shovels from the shed and were posted here and there on the hillside. The offensive began. We dug into the mellifluous earth. The picks bit into the ground with a dull, muffled sound, giving a sudden scream as steel struck flint or hard chalk. Turf, soil, clay, then chalk piled up in mounds around us. The deep gash in the ground was like a cut in a layer cake. Strange, forgotten objects were unearthed, knives, forks, clips of empty cartridges, and once a complete carburettor of antique design; relics of other armies, other wars, buried beneath the waving grass. Ahead of us went men with spades beating down the grass, clearing the turf. Behind followed the builders and carpenters, the cement mixers, laying foundations, erecting the steel ribs, the iron sheeting. Lorries went to and fro all day bringing sand and gravel and granite, pressing down the grass into mud. The hillside became dotted over with hagged white scars which gradually took shape, rectangular, like a pattern of dominoes. Roads linked them together, running straight and wide. Trees, saplings, bushes in their early summer green split before the blue flash of axes, plunging into the meadow ocean, roots bursting from the soil.

All around us the summer ripened as we drove our civilization of steel and concrete far into the heart of the country. Grass grew tall and yellow, bending beneath the wind and its insect burdens and fell before cutters and scythes. Carts roamed about the fields in the shimmering afternoon haze. The precious, abundant fodder was stored away in barns and ricks and the leaves piled up, fold upon fold of heavy green flesh on the trees. Work demanded nothing but the labour of our bodies. In the early morning sense was quick and alive

to a waking world, conversation was brisk, a running accompaniment to the swing of shovel and pick. But as the sun mounted through the sky, the heat and the dull, monotonous labour encased each one of us in a separate crystal. We stripped of our clothes one by one and worked in silence. The air became overloaded with scents of hay and elderberry and lime. Chalk and cement dust lined our lips and nostrils and matted our hair. Resting a moment on our shovels we watched across the boundary of the camp the unfurling pageant of summer; the flash of bronzed arms of hay-makers raised a moment against a porcelain sky, the gold threads blowing from the prongs of the fork, the sudden shout of voices, the chink and clap of harness and the heavy groan of a cart; larks poised above a thin jet of sound, drunken lurch of a bumble bee, or flight of plovers turning over and over like bits of paper against the blue screen of the hills. Ever present and out of sight was the level drone of aircraft and the buried thud of guns. A tank would break onto the skyline for a moment and vanish. The vast sea of grass and wheat reached to our feet. Marching back to the camp past the white house we heard the ring of tennis rackets, laughter; through a gap in the high hedge the sudden flash of white flannels, like a gull's breast, the corner of a chintz table-cloth stirring in the shadow of a tree. Hay carts passed, piled high, garnished with shouting children, lurching like galleons. The scents of roses and honeysuckle and cowparsley lay over the road like separate pools of coloured water. Unable to reconcile it, summer remained a burden. Sense grew numb and shrivelled by the daily impact of splendour.

Work finished for most of us after tea. We are free to go out. We go out through a little five-barred gate which once closed an entry to the farm and now marks the frontier between two worlds. There are other soldiers in the lane leading down to the village, strolling along or standing about at the corners, in groups, in pairs, singly. We walk down past the church and the rectory and the ivy covered gate leading

to big houses and along the rows of little white cottages that crowd close onto the street with their tiny, tight-shut windows shoulder high. The vicar stepping neatly across the pile of dead leaves at his gate smiles at us ecclesiastically. The small children swoop on us again and ask for badges. There are two canteens and a pub and a cafe to go to. The canteens are only an extension of our own world, the illusion of freedom is greater in the street or in the cafe. In the summer there was an old woman who sat always knitting in the open window of her cottage, and at each approach of footsteps looked up quickly as though she were expecting someone, then went back to her knitting. We pass old men, pipes in mouth, leaning against gate posts, like tired sentries watching the world across the fortified frontiers of their territory. Behind them, an open door and a table with a loaf of bread and bottle of sauce; the sound of wood being chopped, the smell of bonfires and rotting grass, a youth mending a bicycle by a tumbledown shed. The sound of a radio coming now from one side, now from the other of the road, the same emphatically cultured voice, the same tum-tummy tune gave the impression that each house backed on to one vast auditorium. In summer when the heat and the dust of the day had drained out of the evening air it was pleasant enough to watch the light deepening the glow on stone and brick, the shadows drawing out and filling with the colour of the sky, to walk down by the river when the reeds stood taut and straight as piano wires vibrating here and there at the touch of under-water fingers; to wander about the village with nothing much to do and nowhere particular to go.

III

The winter had begun suddenly this year. In the last weeks of October the wind, coming suddenly from the East, where it locked the armies of Europe in frozen misery, tore the leaves off the trees in two days, overthrew a marquee and passed on across the Atlantic. After that it grew milder. On several days the sun shone with an echo of summer on a

winter landscape. Then the rain set in and turned the camp into a ruin of mud and wet canvas. Evenings are short now and quickly dark. In the camp the marquees are cold and empty, the sides hitched up here and there to let in the last dregs of orange light as the sun sinks through mist behind the fretted edge of the hills. The rows of tables are swept clear of the debris of food that litters them after every eating. A distasteful odour of damp bread and grass and dust lingers in the air. One or two solitary figures sit bowed over writing pads, or with head thrown back, lips curling round the stem of pen-holders, stare into the loose-hung flanks of the ceiling. A piano sounds from the next marquee, and a guitar further off from another tent. It is Saturday afternoon.

In the cafe there is a pleasant hum of talk and people and the clink and patter of crockery. In the corner table sits a young private with his father and mother. His new, stiff, khaki encases him like a shell from which protrude a pink scrubbed face and pink hands. A small rickety table by the fire becomes the family circle. The mother is small and sinewy, worry and hard work have left their scars on her hands and drawn the lines in her cheeks but have not softened the temper of her wiry vitality. Teapot in hand, cups around her, in the familiar setting she speaks the rapid automatic prattle of tea-parties, mid-week socials, which leaves her eyes free to explore the room, quizzing like hungry birds, and her thoughts to pursue their own complex counterpoint. The words patrol the dimensions of her own world. "And the front room's been papered, you know, my room, and it looks ever so bright. I insisted on two coats of paint." Remembering how she won the battle with the contractors, proof of her domestic ability, she smiles. "You remember Jean, well she's expecting, and Aunt Mabel was saying. . . ."

Words like brightly polished pebbles run on into the sea, flashing their surfaces in the sun. Her eyes, linking with a deeper strata of her mind, play up and down the long familiar features, eyes, lip, curve of his hair, sensitive as a seismograph

to any change. The boy listens behind a smile that attaches itself in rigid creases to his cheeks. He remembers and tries to re-establish the importance of these things in a new scale of values, weighing them against parades, discipline, bren guns, armour-piercing shells. The table of cheap, blue crockery glitters in the firelight between them. He, too, speaks from the remote and enclosed world in which he lives. He talks about food, duties, the corporal, falling asleep in lectures, describing with difficulty the outer surfaces of an existence, almost apologetically. Unknowing, he cannot convey the intensity of these things; both speak from their own frontier. Only the parallel and insulated glances of their eyes unite them, giving to their words a meaning which is not the meaning of the words themselves. As she listens she creases her face into the moulds of astonishment, admiration, amazement, appropriate to each subject. She picks on a word, a phrase here and there, "falling to sleep in lectures," attaching to it instantly from the long train of memories her own imagined reality.

"But how awful to be so tired. Fancy dropping right off to sleep. Now why not come back to the hotel afterwards and lie down for half an hour? You could do that. Couldn't he?"

She turns to the father a half-glance, the cue for him to nod approval to what she has already decided upon. He sits back in his chair, comfortable in the double warmth of tea and fireside. Crumb of toast on the new inexpensive suit and trilby hat on his lap. Only on the circumference of the circle, he is its acknowledged support, bearing the weight, paying the bill, not sharing in the prominences. For a time he makes the effort he feels is required of him, adapting his speech to exceptional circumstances. But soon prefers to let the hum and murmur of voices brush over him and replies in the slow, ponderous tones of head clerk, foreman of works. Tea is finished and they sit back from the table, silent with their thoughts, vaguely comfortable in each other's presence. Mother in black, the "safe" colour, two flat birds nestling on her hat above her never-resting eyes. Father stretching

the drowsiness out of his face, tapping a cigarette on a gold case, gold chain linking the pockets of his waistcoat. The son thinks : " This is the moment I've been looking forward to, between parades, in lectures, after lights out. I've got them rooms at the hotel. There's all to-morrow yet."

In the village the windows are all tightly shuttered, and only the chinks of light indicate the separate and private existences within. Outside, ceaselessly, to and fro, the jagged iron-clad ring of boots in the darkness. Exiles in khaki, an army in occupation of their own country. Dressed alike, eating alike. Every town and village has its contingent like its cats. Each one of us has his roots, his beginnings and his future, each one belongs somewhere, but not here. The world we have left, the world of childhood and youth, of our tiny triumphs and failures beyond the ring fence of this camp is burnt to ruins. A costly ceremonious cremation of a thing already long dead. The future is everything or nothing behind the smoke. Or perhaps the end is still the beginning.

Night closes impartially over the village and the camp, over the raw tin huts and the mellow steeple of the church, over the gardens of the large houses and the compact roofs of farmsteads and the grey peaked cones of canvas. A moth flies at the flame, singes its wings and drops into the hot wax. A canvas breadth away the moon steers a steady course through the velvet sky and the night's flock of bombers, flying high, turn southward. " I bet they're giving them hell," says Don, " they say it's the biggest battle in the history of the world. More killed in the last few weeks than since the beginning of the war." He curls his toes, one foot round the other, sitting on his bed and munching chocolate.

" I'd like to see every country in the world," said Johnnie.

Meaning the world of a fireside, a girl, a radio and a safe job.

In the bedroom of the white house the sheets are turned down and the lamp by the bedside goes out. The curtains are drawn back and the window opened. The blackness of the night flows into the blackness of the room, and into the blackness of the tent.

SHAVING THROUGH THE BLITZ

"FANFARLO"
(G. W. STONIER)

MY interview at the Ministry has been followed by letters: one, two, three.

Letter 1. "We are hoping to put through your policy of Optimo-Pessimism, but it will take time. In the meanwhile people are getting rather restive and we are starting a campaign of clear skies and hearts of oak. Will you join in?"

Letter 2. "We note your statement that Optimo-Pessimism is the policy of keeping public opinion closely grounded on fact and of not raising hopes too high. This is our eventual aim. The urgency of the moment, however, is to make the best of a ticklish situation. Will you help?"

Letter 3. "We think your suggestion that we have chosen the best way of losing the war exaggerated. The position in France regarding propaganda and news, etc., was quite different. However, that is a matter for academic debate. The Ministry have decided for the moment—and keeping your plan in view—to make special efforts to distract and hearten people. Once more, can we rely on your help? We should start by paying you a retainer."

I'm afraid the retainer—which Lizzie, reading over my shoulder, spotted first—settled it. I am one of those unfortunates who cannot live without retainers from here and there, that being the nearest I have got to earning a salary in this world.

My particular job for the Ministry, while they are weighing the value of Optimo-Pessimism, is to provide slogans that shall be breezy and full of dare-and-do. All sections of the community must be appealed to. Since receiving this commission, slogans have been floating in my mind all day like banners. Hardly had I laid down the last letter from the Ministry when

the first banner unfurled. "BE A BRICK IN THE BUILDING OF A NEW AND BETTER WORLD."

"A retainer!" exclaimed Lizzie, with her best loopy smile. "Oh, isn't that wonderful! We might get married!"

Why aren't we married? It is one of the questions I ask myself. There is nothing to stop us, so far as I can see; neither of us objects in principle. But our relation remains as it was. One morning, perhaps, Lizzie wakes up with the thought, "To-day we'll get married," but the phase passes and by ten o'clock there are other things to attend to.

Sometimes I think she is the most marvellous girl in the world, after Bette Davis. Then I—and my lack of salary—can never be worthy of her.

At other times I look at Lizzie out of the corner of one eye and wonder if we have anything in common, except, of course, difference of sex. In that mood I feel it would be a mistake for us to sign ourselves away in documents.

But the point is really that there is no reason, for better for worse, in rain or in thunder, why we ever should marry. We are quite happy as we are.

I once knew a man who had never worn long pants. In the season of long pants they asked him, "Why don't you wear long pants?" "I don't see the need," he said. In fact he never wore pants at all, and was amazed to find that anyone else did.

Lizzie says many things—charmingly or unnecessarily—just to see how I'll take them. This "We'll go and get married" is one of them. It gives me a thrill. I am content to leave it at that.

To-day, however, with news of the retainer, she quickly forgets marriage in favour of a day in the country. "With your new job," she says, "a change will do you good." We have let ourselves grow blitz-weary, town-shagged. There must be a banner for that, too—"WORK ON, MUNITION-MAKER, WORK ON, BUT DON'T FORGET THE RHODODENDRONS IN JULY."

To the country, then!

But how do we go? On bicycles? No, with the long trail through the suburbs, without sign-posts, it would hardly be worth it. The day would be over before it was begun. We shall take the train. It is so long since we travelled in a train that we are quite excited.

Lunch we shall take with us: neither of us feels equal to queueing up with the local Lions at an hotel. Lizzie looks round for a hamper and can find nothing better than the cat-basket, a wicker-work affair with a lid and a window. We ransack the house for food, because all our tins are hidden, against invasion, in places we have forgotten.

Lizzie takes the basket; she insists, I am glad to say, on carrying the basket, crammed with sandwiches; while I gaily swing a cane. Her dress, which so often recalls some phase of the war (a cold spell will bring out the Finnish hood), has hints, this summer morning, of Spanish peasant women, with handkerchief-tied heads and the belongings in a basket.

Somehow, with the cane as symbol of setting out, we reach the station.

At the entrance to the platforms the air is loud with swing music. This gives way to the voice of an invisible porter intoning the names of stations.

Stations served: "Gravesend, Uralite, Cliffe, Sharnal Street, Beluncle Halt, Borstal, Hoo, All Hallows, Port Victoria."

"I don't like that line at all," says Lizzie, as though it were a line of goods in a shop. "It sounds rather squalid. And in any case I thought Port Victoria was in South Africa. Let's try another."

While we look for chocolate (chocolate?) and turn over covers on a bookstall, there are other snatches hardly more promising Fagend, Zion Halt, Rainy....

"Oh, this is worse and worse," exclaims Lizzie. "Are there no trains—possible ones, I mean? Why don't you start looking at a time-table or something?"

But then, in husky tones, comes the line we are waiting for.

"Gales (begins the voice), Pingorm, Wattlepoop—(Pause for deep breath)—Bishops Banting, Rory St. Swithins, Oxtail, Much Tupping, Polecats and Sodding Nimbus, Potto, Little Merds, Typing-on-the-Sly, Smeeth, Swurl, Sexhow, and Sundry Steeples."

"It has everything," says Lizzie.

"We'll go the whole way," I agreed; and nip off to buy tickets, while among banners unfolding in my brain this flies high: "BOOKMAKERS, ARE YOU DOING YOUR BITTER-AND-BURTON FOR THIS LITTLE OLD E. OF OURS?" That would look well framed in bars at Aintree and Elephant and Castle. I can see that if I go on at this rate my retainer will be well earned.

On the platform there is the usual last-minute scurry. We find seats for ourselves. The doorway is blocked by a middle-aged couple. He (on the platform): "Good-bye, then." She: "Good-bye." (Pause.) "Oh, but aren't you coming, too?" He: "Of course, I was forgetting." He jumps on just in time.

Looking round, Lizzie notices that we are thirteen in the carriage. It is the thirteenth day of the month, and a boy in the corner squints dreadfully. There that particular story ends; except that the carriage only has seats for ten.

We are sitting six a side, with one at large.

There is bad luck in it after all, for the thirteenth passenger (standing) is Captain Spandril, with two much-labelled suit-cases. He is the sort of neighbour who can't be avoided even if one slips off for a day in the country.

"Fancy," says the Captain, "meeting you two lovely people here! Up, Hermes Street! Well!"

"Herpes Street," I reply, stiffly.

Lizzie and I look at one another in dismay. The Captain has spotted Lizzie's basket. "Brought the ferrets, eh?" He rubs his hands. He is in high good humour. And everyone else in the carriage is delighted with the Captain's spirits.

He is telling us about railway travel in Burma when we run into an air-raid belt. Outside, bombs are falling, guns go poppity-pop, the guard runs up and down the corridor shouting "Take cover," blinds are pulled down and we pile on the floor. For a few minutes we are machine-gunned. Then the train emerges into green raidless country.

The Captain, now, is firmly seated in one of the twelve seats.

He mops his forehead. "Damn that feller coming down and peppering us—pretty hot; pretty hot in here altogether." He leans forward and taps me on the knee: "About that map, now."

"Not now," I protest.

"Ah, of course. Strangers present."

The Captain whistles for a while, then leans back and closes his eyes. Lizzie and I relax. We look excitedly out of the window, where clouds sit like bundles of washing on the hills, where a road wriggles along a valley to a little house as stolid as a Dutch doll.

We chatter with an idiocy which is infectious.

"Look, a rabbit!"

"Red earth!"

"How are the slogans?" whispers Lizzie. This seems to be her *idée fixe* for the day.

Without conscious thought a new slogan springs to my lips fully armed. "FIREWATCHER, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?" I whisper back.

"Give me curry!' the Captain is booming. "That's what I always say in a heat-wave. Good old curry." He falls into conversation with an R.A.F. man sitting beside him, and in ten minutes the whole carriage knows the most secret dispositions of the neighbourhood. Here at a point midway between two villas is the entrance to the underground aerodrome; there the munition dumps are buried, and so on through oil supplies to food stocks and the password of the searchlight battery.

"Marvellous," says the Captain. "What a war, eh? Keep it under your hat, of course." Nods of approval.

The train has pulled up at a little station, and to our surprise everyone, including the R.A.F. man and Captain Spandril, hastily gets out. Lizzie and I are left alone, still jammed together in the midst of empty seats. Clouds roll past the window. "Why," exclaims Lizzie, "everyone's smoking!" They are, too. We scramble out on to the platform, where a single queue stretches into the distance. "What's happening?" we ask. "Cigarettes." Captain Spandril has opened one of his suit-cases, from which he is selling, like hot cakes, packets of ten.

From the village, farm labourers and civil servants come to swell the queue. The train moves on.

But by taking buses we are able to cut off the train, puffing round a corner, at a further point in its journey. Our carriage is now no more than comfortably full, and Captain Spandril is missing.

I sigh with relief. We can begin to let ourselves go. Puff, puff, goes the engine. How foreign the country looks. Lizzie is in ecstasies over a horse in a field, who remains opposite our carriage for a long time, gazing in.

"Cute," says Lizzie. "Like Greta Garbo."

The horse, leaning its jaw on a gate-post, looks lazily astonished, and has certainly something of an air of Ninotchka. I should say he is as good at staring into railway carriages as W. H. Davies was once at staring into the eyes of cows.

But I have always felt a faint scepticism, a mild horror, about the country. One goes for quiet; and a gang of rooks is at work murderously tearing at the furrows. One glances over a hedge; a scarecrow starts up like a crucified clown. Then the things people are reduced to doing in the country—ferreting, for example, and tickling trout—don't appeal to me. I understand people who tickle cats, and people who tickle one another are my own flesh and blood.

Our rain reaches buffers: this is Sundry Steeples, the

end of the line. We get out. I must admit that now the innocence of the country begins to take hold of me. I grant Lizzie her horse, I grant high streets, old churchyards and quiet streams, pigs and cows, too, but not goats or chickens. The few trees I can identify, elms and silver birches and willows, I search out and enjoy. There is a Field with a Gate; there is a Hill; there is a Wood.

We have lunch and walk around and watch the over-grown lambs pretending to frisk, and everywhere there are big romping, rolling clouds.

"What is a cloud?" I ask myself.

"Yes, what are clouds?" I say aloud to Lizzie, who tries to count them. But clouds, like so many things in the world, are equivocal.

A posse of the Home Guard springs out from the hedges, and we are surrounded.

"Halt!"

"Who goes there?"

"What's in that bag?"

"Basket," adds one, a lance-corporal. "Pigeons."

At the police station we do our best to explain. We didn't know it was a defended area. The basket is for taking our cat to the vet's when it's ill, and to-day it has contained lunch; witness the empty thermos.

A slogan is forming at the back of my head, and during cross-examination it takes some such form as this: "'DON'T FORGET ME,' SAID HOME-GUARD HAL, AS THE OTHERS SWUNG BY WITH A BAND AND A CROWD; 'I'M IN ON THIS TOO.'"

But after lunch, what did we do with the paper?

"Buried it" (triumphantly from Lizzie).

The sergeant looks stern; he examines our identity cards. "You ought to have saved that paper. All right, you can go."

So we are released, Lizzie carrying the basket, I clutching my cane, and now the big rolling, romping clouds are overhead and it is raining. Arm in arm we start to run towards the

station. I don't like running, and my dentist has warned me against swallowing plates. But we catch our train.

We pass Ninotchka still watching the trains go by.

We pass the raid belt and things are as noisy as ever.

We pass endless backs of little rows where people's elbows and legs project from windows.

We hesitate over points ; we are back in London.

The old smell of rain assails the nostrils : burnt rubber, rotten mushrooms, and what else ?—a wet bathing dress left too long in the cupboard.

More ruins, and then our ruin which we know so well.

In the dusk Captain Spandril, with the second suitcase open, is selling souvenirs of the Fire of London.

" Burnt oak, broken stone ! " he cries. " Oh, it's you. Well, one must do something to keep body and soul together these days. Makes you sick to see some of these profiteers. How's the mongoose ? "

For once, he doesn't mention maps.

Lizzie and I lean drunkenly together in the rain that drives round us and springs up from the pavement like gas-jets.

We have had our day of escape. We have breathed our fill. The country has made us tired in the way the country should.

A last slogan rises to the surface unbidden :

" WHO'S FOR THE MAYOR AND CORPORATION, WHO'LL FIGHT FOR GOLDERS GREEN ? "

Well, the Ministry asked for it, and they shall have it.

FAMINE

S. RAJA RATNAM

AFTER the drought came the famine, so that it was like waking out of one nightmare into another still more fearful. In the rice-fields, where the harvest should have rustled, heavy and golden, were only the half-burnt stubble of their crops. The farmers stared at the dust and ruin in their fields, and searched one another's faces for an answer, their eyes becoming deep and dull as the days passed by. At night, when the hungry children whimpered in their sleep, a hopeless anger would seize their hearts. Sometimes the wail of a woman would rise above the whimperings and groanings, and they would know that Death, which had stalked noiselessly among them, had found another victim; but after a while they forgot even to shudder at Death.

This obscure village was so remote, and the famine so universal that there was no possibility of any immediate relief. They had to survive as best they could till help came. When their stock had dwindled away they scoured the country for food, eating any kind of birds, roots and animals they could find. Soon even these grew scarcer. Only the vultures wheeled high above the sky and scanned the earth and flapped their wings, while down below rats grew fat and sleek.

As always, a calamity brought the villagers nearer to one another. They sought food together and saw to it that the misery of one was the concern of all.

When the earth failed to provide them with the food they needed, the villagers, good Hindus though they were, slaughtered their cattle. The very thought had nauseated them. They had looked uncomfortably at one another as they contemplated this act of sacrilege, but hunger was an uncompromising tyrant.

After a while when they had slaughtered all their cattle, they were hungry again.

"My little one kept crying the whole night and I had to slap him hard. . . ."

"Perhaps the relief train. . . . I dreamt it last night. There was so much to eat. Bags and bags of rice there were."

"Fool's dream!" cried an old woman with wild eyes, "I too dreamed. But there were dead men everywhere and God came and talked to me about death. Wretches! He is punishing you for your wickedness. There is no hope. I know. God...."

"Shut up, you old hag, You will frighten the children with your wild talk."

The village priest motioned to be heard, the well-fed sleekness having long gone out of him.

"There is no food," he said, "except what the mercy of brother Murugasu can give us. Yesterday evening I saw him drive his bull to the shed. If we could persuade him then we will have food for a few days."

Farmer Murugasu lived half a mile away, isolated from the rest because he was both rich and unfriendly by nature. There had been much ill-will between him and the village. He was a dark, muscular creature, whose strength made him an object of fear and hatred. He kept very much to himself, working his field with as little help as possible and at the toddy-shop he would gaze gloomily into his toddy mug oblivious of the shouts and laughter around him. Ever since his mother had died people had hoped that he would marry a woman who would bring some friendliness into his heart, but he had not so much as even nodded at the village match-maker. When the famine came he had stood aloof from the others, and had not participated in the organised search for food.

The priest had to argue with the villagers before they agreed to go with him to plead with Murugasu.

"Would it not be simpler," suggested someone, "if we just went and stole it without asking him?"

"It's better that we should ask him first," said the priest. "He cannot refuse."

"Why not?" objected the other, "We know him too well."

"Anyway we shall ask him first," said the priest firmly. "Besides he locks his bull away in the shed every night."

Murugasu was busy at his bullock-cart when the villagers came to see him. He lifted his face, with its protruding yellow eyes, and regarded them silently for a moment. Then he returned to his work chopping at a log of wood with a heavy axe. A few yards away the bull lay under a withered lime-tree.

The priest coughed and walked slowly towards the broad shiny back of Murugasu.

"Brother," he said, "you haven't asked us why we have come."

The axe flashed in the sun, but Murugasu said nothing.

"We have come to ask your help," said the priest, "the women and children are hungry."

Murugasu stopped hacking at the wood and faced the priest.

"What has that got to do with me?" he said gruffly, "I have none to give."

"You have a bull, brother " said the priest.

"And look how fat he is!" called out someone.

Murugasu faced the crowd, his eyes glinting like a blade flashed in the sun.

"So I have. And what of it, eh?"

An angry murmur rose from the crowd. The priest bade them to be quiet.

"Can't you forget your hate just now, brother," said the priest soothingly, "the people are hungry. These are times when we should help one another."

"Ho! Ho!" said Murugasu, mockingly, "that's funny. So even a priest is hungry enough to sin in the face of God. A Brahmin priest inciting these people to eat the flesh of a sacred animal!"

The priest flinched under this taunt, but with all the quietness and dignity he could summon he answered:

"These are difficult times, brother. What matters is not whether one eats horse-flesh or beef, but whether one lives. Even a Brahmin is human enough to fear death."

"Die then!" said Murugasu angrily. "Better that than be reduced to the level of pariah dogs. I've seen how you stained the earth with the blood of sacred animals and ate their flesh without shame. Anyway I shall not be a party to such a

sacrilege. As long as I have strength left in my hands neither you nor your starving children are going to kill my bull for food. I shall not become a pariah dog to please you all. At least I have the courage still to be a good Hindu."

"Your hate, brother. . . ."

"Yes," said Murugasu, "I hate you all as much as you hate me even now. Only much more than hate, I have contempt for you all, first because you want to eat the flesh of a sacred animal and secondly because you come cringing for my help."

Angry murmurs rose from the crowd and Murugasu gripped tight the handle of his axe. The priest, fearing that violence might result, begged of the crowd to keep calm.

Murugasu returned to his work and, after a while, the villagers left him. Murugasu spat on the ground and rubbed his hungry belly.

A few days later the priest led the people in the direction of Murugasu's farm. The pinched, haggard faces of the men were quiet and determined this time. The nightmare of the last few days, when death had moved among them more frequently, had become intolerable. It had become a matter of counting one's life by the hour and listening to the rumours of approaching aid.

The crowd, among whom were women and children, advanced slowly through Murugasu's gate. Lean ribbed, hungry eyed, they looked like some fearful procession of the dead. Silent, except for the crunch of the loose soil beneath their feet.

Murugasu was squatting by the door of the shed, and he lifted his head as the crowd stopped in front of him. He had changed completely within the last few days. The body was still broad and muscular, but it did not radiate the strength which they had always feared. His eyes moved lifelessly in their strangely hollow sockets, whilst his hair was almost grey.

The priest hesitated a moment before he spoke.

"We have come for your bull, brother. We mean to have it this time."

"Bull? What bull?" said Murugasu as if to himself, and

his forehead puckering as though he wished to remember things. "Ah, the bull? Of course, the bull. It's in the shed."

"Then we must kill it and share it among ourselves," said the priest. Murugasu's restless eyes steadied themselves as he stared at the priest.

"Food. Ah! Ah!" he said, haltingly. "That cannot be. Because because, let me think. . . . You cannot eat the flesh of a sacred animal. I told you so before. I won't let anybody eat my bull."

A dribble of saliva escaped his mouth and trickled slowly down. Half a dozen men stood around him and stared.

"But you must, brother," said the priest. "There is nothing else to eat and the people are desperate and hungry. Have you no heart?"

"That I have," said Murugasu, looking at a boy, "but the bull is a sacred animal."

"Mind you, brother," said the priest angrily, "we intend to have your bull even if we have to use force. If you don't give us the key we shall break open the door."

He held out his hand for the keys. Murugasu stood up and pressed his back against the door.

"I won't let you eat my bull. Keep back! I'll. . . ."

He lashed out with his fist and the men struggled with him and in a little while had him pinned to the ground. He screamed and struggled, and then became quiet all of a sudden as he heard them break open the door of the shed.

The doors were flung open and the crowd moved eagerly forward.

Then they stood still and stared at what they saw.

The bull lay half-buried in the straw, its body stiff and bloated. Here and there were red weals where the rats had nibbled.

The crowd held their breath and stared. One of them moved forward and touched the glassy eyes of the bull. He drew back startled, as a dark swarm of flies rose in a buzzing, angry cloud.

A MAN ABOUT THE HOUSE

FRED URQUHART

WHEN Mrs. Watt opened the gate she saw a fair-haired young man watching her out of the window. Waddling up the path, she was aware of him watching her every step. The road from the 'bus-stop had been uphill, and the sweat was trickling down her forehead and fat blowsy cheeks. She wiped her face, and as she drew her fingers across her brow, she saw that the young man was still standing at the window, gazing at her. As if he were staring at something in the zoo, she thought. She went to the back-door, and as she was raising her hand to knock, the young man opened the door suddenly. She stood with her upraised hand in the air, feeling foolish.

"You'll be the new charwoman?" he said.

She nodded and shuffled past him.

"My mother's not up yet," he said. "But you can just begin."

She put her black oilskin bag on the chair in the scullery and as she unpinned her hat she took stock of him. He was a very pale young man with hollow cheeks pitted with huge pores. He had pale blue, watery eyes that stared persistently at her from between his almost white lashes. She felt vaguely uncomfortable under his stare as she took her apron out of her bag and tied it around her fat stomach.

"What do you want me to do first?" she said.

"You can do the fires," he said.

He showed her the box with blacklead and brushes. "You know how to clean a fire, don't you?" he said. "You rake out the ashes and you take away the fender and——"

Mrs. Watt laughed. "Bless me, laddie!" she said. "I cleaned fireplaces long before ye were born."

He stood and watched her as she set to work. All the time she was blackleading she was conscious of his watchful pale eyes, and she began to be annoyed at his continued scrutiny.

He had to step aside when she took out the ashes to the bin, and she said : " Ye're just like my first joker, he was aye gettin' in the way. I often used to say to him, ' G'wa' oot o' ma road for ony favour and let me get on wi' ma work '."

But the young man did not take the hint. He hovered about the room, moving restlessly from one chair to another. He kept up a persistent breathing through his half-open mouth. It was neither a whistle nor a tune and it began to get on Mrs. Watt's nerves.

" What'll I do next ? " she said.

" The dishes."

He went before her into the scullery and pointed to a pile of dirty dishes on the board by the sink. " You know how to do them, don't you ? " he said. " You drip them on this tray."

Mrs. Watt laughed, but she did not say anything. The laddie's surely sort of simple, she said to herself. But she knitted her brows irritably when he lounged against the boiler and watched her. He was behind her, but all the time she was aware of the thin, tuneless whistling. She rattled the dishes noisily, trying to vent her irritation on them. She was relieved when Mrs. Laurie came in. She was a tired-looking little woman with a fretful face and pale eyes like her son.

" Good morning, Mrs. Watt," she said. " Has Eric been telling you what to do ? "

" Ay," Mrs. Watt said.

" I don't know what I'd do without him," Mrs. Laurie said. " He's such a comfort to me. Far better than many a daughter would have been. He's terribly handy about the house."

" I can see that," Mrs. Watt said.

Mrs. Laurie leaned against the sink and began to lament about her troubles. Not that Mrs. Watt could see that she had any cause to complain. Her husband, who had been a well-to-do market gardener, had died several years before, and had left her in very comfortable circumstances.

" Eric was our only child," she said. " He's all that I've got left now. Thank goodness, he's never needed to go out and work. I don't know what I'd have done if he'd had to go out every day to business. For all that he would have made, anyway. It wouldn't have been worth it. And I feel that I need somebody to keep me company. It's nice, I always think, to have a man about the house."

" Well, it depends on the man," Mrs. Watt said. " I've had three, and none o' them were the kind o' men that ye like to see sittin' continually by the fireside. Not that that kept them frae doin' that, of course. None o' them were the kind that would break their necks bein' in the front o' any queue lookin' for work. My first joker especially. Bless me, but he was oftener at hame than he was in a job."

She sighed as she polished the chairs in the living-room. " But ye shouldn't speak ill o' the dead. And he's been dead a long time, puir man. Gallopin' consumption he had."

" I sometimes think that Eric's got consumption," Mrs. Laurie said. " He's been complaining of pains in his chest and head."

While his mother and Mrs. Watt were speaking, Eric lounged about. He never opened his mouth, but Mrs. Watt was acutely aware of his presence. He seemed to be getting continually in her road. She wished that he would go into another room or go outside, but he remained beside them. He did not appear to be listening to their conversation, but Mrs. Watt felt that nothing escaped him. She felt, too, that Mrs. Laurie would say much more if he were not there. All the time she watched her son, twisting her hands nervously.

Suddenly Eric spoke.

He said : " Is there any lemonade in the house ? "

" No, dear," his mother said. " I don't think so, dear."

Eric said nothing. He stared in front of him, his lips drawn in in a silent whistle.

" Did you want some lemonade, dear ? " Mrs. Laurie said anxiously. " Take some money and go and get some, dear."

Eric lifted her bag from the sideboard and took out a two-shilling piece. He tossed it in the air and put it in his pocket. Mrs. Watt felt a sense of relief as he lounged out.

As soon as he had gone, Mrs. Laurie licked her lips nervously and said: "I really don't know what to do about Eric. He's not feeling well at all."

"Is it thae pains ye were tellin' me aboot?" said Mrs. Watt.

"Yes, I took him to a specialist and he examined him, but he didn't seem able to find anything wrong with him. I had to pay three guineas for the examination, and do you know what he said? You'll never guess, Mrs. Watt."

"I dinnie ken," Mrs. Watt said. "I never was ony guid at guessin'."

"He said——" Mrs. Laurie gulped. "He said: 'There's damn all wrong with him. You should get him a job'."

Mrs. Watt tittered, but when she saw the look on Mrs. Laurie's face, she changed her titter into a cough and began to fill a pail at the sink.

"I'm terribly worried about him," Mrs. Laurie said. "I keep wondering whether I've done the right thing by him. Maybe I shouldn't have kept him at home like this. Maybe I've spoiled him. I don't know. But I felt that I needed company. After his father died, I simply had to have a man about the house."

"If ye'd been married to ma first joker you wouldn't think that," Mrs. Watt said, putting her pail on the scullery floor and flopping down beside it. "He was a lad——" wringing out her cloth and slapping it down on the linoleum—"and a half! Never did an honest day's work in his life. He was aye sittin' in ma road. A fair scunner!"

Mrs. Laurie's fingers plucked nervously at the cords of her dressing-gown. "I wish I knew what to do about Eric," she said. "He'll have to register for the army next month."

"Ach, dinnie worry about him," Mrs. Watt said. "He doesnie look strong. They'll never take him."

"It's not that I was thinking about," Mrs. Laurie said. "I was wondering what I'd do if they didn't take him."

The front door banged, and Eric came in with three bottles of lemonade. He stared at his mother and Mrs. Watt, but there was no flicker of expression on his face. Mrs. Laurie stopped talking as soon as the door banged; she went away to her bedroom. Eric switched on the wireless and sat down beside it. He took three packets of chocolate from his pocket. Mrs. Watt eyed them, thinking to herself how she would thank him. But Eric began to eat the chocolate himself, never saying a word. Between bites he whistled tunelessly. After a while he opened one of the bottles and drank some of the lemonade. He nodded his head in time with the music from a jazz orchestra; his pale eyes staring at the window.

Mrs. Watt did some small jobs in the scullery. When she returned to the living-room she saw that Eric had opened another bottle and drunk some of the lemonade although he had drunk only a little out of the first bottle. She gave her head a puzzled shake and went to clean the bathroom.

She was wiping out the bath when Mrs. Laurie came in to speak to her. "How many days a week do you think you'll be able to come, Mrs. Watt?" she said in a low voice.

"How many days do you want me?" Mrs. Watt said.

"Well, I'd like you every day, but Eric says it's nonsense." Mrs. Laurie swallowed with embarrassment. "He says we don't really need a charwoman, and that he's quite capable of doing all the work himself. But, of course, I can't have him doing that." She looked uneasily behind her in the direction of the living-room. "Do you think you'd be able to come three days a week?"

"In the forenoons?" Mrs. Watt said. "I'd like away at twelve o'clock if possible."

"That'll be all right," Mrs. Laurie said. She lowered her voice again. "Don't say anything to Eric about how often you're going to come. He—er—well, he's never got on very well with any of the women we've had. But, of course, you're

different," she added quickly. "He seems to be getting on all right with you."

"Ay," Mrs. Watt said.

"Just don't say anything to him," Mrs. Laurie said. "Nothing that'll make him angry. He's got an awful quick temper."

"All right," Mrs. Watt said.

She finished cleaning the bathroom, then she began to peel potatoes for the dinner. When she finished them, she went to ask Mrs. Laurie what else she could do. The bathroom door was half open, and Eric was busy cleaning the taps that Mrs. Watt had done already. He was whistling tunelessly, his eyes staring through the door at Mrs. Watt, staring straight through her.

"Never heed him," Mrs. Laurie whispered. "He's so used to cleaning everything himself that he thinks nobody else can do it. He won't even let me do it. Never mind him. It gives him something to do. We'll just have to humour him until he goes to the army."

Mrs. Watt was bewildered, but she said nothing; she kept looking anxiously at the clock. She wanted to get into the Cross Keys as soon as it opened; she needed a drink more badly to-day than she ever needed one. That laddie was just a bit more than she could bear. No wonder his mother looked as though she was being driven potty.

"Do you see that?" Mrs. Laurie cried.

Each of the bottles was open, and some lemonade had been taken out of each. The corks were lying on top of the wireless. Mrs. Laurie shook her head apologetically at Mrs. Watt and corked them. "Eric's so careless," she said. "I don't know how he'll do in the army. I wonder how he'll get on?"

"Oh, he'll get on all right," Mrs. Watt said.

But she wondered whether he would. She had an idea that the army would not deal with Eric so kindly and as softly as his mother had done. She did not know which of them she felt most sorry for.

Mrs. Laurie came to the door with her and whispered: "Now, you'll be sure to come back to-morrow?"

"Sure," Mrs. Watt said.

"That's a promise!" Mrs. Laurie said.

There was something so frightened and pathetic in her tone that Mrs. Watt could not say what she would have liked to say.

"Ay, that's a promise," she said.

But as she went down the path she wondered whether it was a promise she could keep. And when she turned at the gate and saw Eric staring at her out of the living-room window, she felt panic-stricken. She forced herself to smile but there was no responding smile from him. He continued to stare straight in front of him. Just like a cat, Mrs. Watt thought, hurrying to reach the Cross Keys. Just like a cat waiting to pounce. . . . Or was it like a cat that had already pounced and was licking its lips after eating its prey?

Y LIST

J. MACLAREN-ROSS

It started with a pain in my side. I didn't know I had pneumonia; nobody told me. We were out on the square, first period, 06.55 hours. Arms drill. The C.S.M. himself was taking us. He looked browned off: I don't believe he liked it any more than we did. Drilling before breakfast's a bugger, believe me.

That morning I just couldn't do anything right. I felt sick and also I had this pain. It caught me every time I breathed; you know, like when you've been running and you get a stitch. Only worse than that, of course. At last I couldn't stand it any longer. I thought I was going to be sick over the man in front of me, so I committed a terrible crime: I broke the ranks.

The C.S.M. was outraged. At first he couldn't speak at all when he saw me walking across the square towards him. He went scarlet and his face swelled up. Then he found his voice and shouted: "Go back! Fall in! What the hell you think you're doing?"

"I'm sick, sir," I said. "I feel sick."

"I'll have you in the guard-room," the C.S.M. shouted. "Sergeant Smithson, get hold of that man. Take him to hell out of here!"

"To the guard-room, sir?"

"No, back to his hut. Anywhere. But get him off the bloody square. Out of my sight."

"Very good, sir. Come on, you! Quick march!"

But once off the square Sergeant Smithson said: "You don't need to look so scared, lad. He won't stick you in the guard-room. He don't mean nothing, not really."

"I'm not scared, Sergeant," I said. "I'm sick. I've got a pain." I could hardly stand up.

"Where's it get you? In the guts?"

"No, not in the guts. In the side."

" Take off your belt, and lie down, then. If you don't feel no better after breakfast you better go sick."

I lay down on the bed, and lying down the pain didn't seem so bad. In fact I thought it'd gone, till I tried to sit up. Then I found out my mistake. So I lay down again.

The other blokes came tumbling in; they'd been dismissed. The corporal said: "Dodging the column again, eh? You ought to be under arrest by rights, you ought, breaking the ranks like that. I reckon you got off bleeding lucky myself."

Then they all went off to breakfast, rattling their mess-tins. I didn't feel like eating anything, so I didn't go. I just lay there until they came back again.

" Ain't you eaten nothing?" the corporal said. "Cor, you *must* be sick."

" He *looks* sick," the other blokes said, examining me. " He don't arf look yellow."

I didn't care if I looked green, I only wanted to be left alone. The corporal got concerned and put his hand on my forehead.

" You got a temperacher all right. You better go sick."

" Oh, f—— off," " for Christ's sake."

" Who're you talking to ? "

" You," I said. " Anyone. F—— off and leave me in peace."

" He's sick all right," the corporal said. " Better ring up the Reception Station."

" Get an ambulance."

" Get the M.O."

I didn't mind who they got, it was all one to me. A runner went off to the Reception Station and the others all stood round the bed talking in hushed voices, as though I were already dead.

Presently an ambulance arrived. Two orderlies came in; one shoved a thermometer in my mouth. Then he took it out and looked at the result. The other orderly looked at it and said, " Cor." He was impressed. They both shook their heads.

" You in any pain, mate ? " the first orderly asked.

" Yes," I said.

The orderly nodded; he'd expected that. "Appendix," he muttered to himself. "Obvious case."

The other orderly thought not. He favoured ptomaine poisoning. "We'd fish for tea last night, remember," he said. An argument ensued. I could have stopped it by telling them that I'd had my appendix out long ago and that I hadn't eaten any fish the night before, but I didn't feel like a lot of talk.

The corporal said: "Well, what I want to know is he for the sick bay or not?"

"Yes, he's for the sick bay all right," they said.

"Right. Get his small kit together, someone."

The orderlies lifted me on to a stretcher. The sky tilted round as they carried me down the steps of the hut. Someone threw a hastily-packed haversack into the ambulance after me. Then there was the road running backwards behind us and the sky tilted again as they lifted me out at the Reception Station.

The medical officer looked down at me. "Hullo, you again?" he said.

This medical officer didn't like me. I didn't like him either, come to that. It was a reciprocal dislike. He said: "A pain in your side? Which side? H'm. We'd better keep you in. I'll examine you later. Can you walk upstairs, d'you think?"

"I can try, sir," I said. I started to struggle up off the stretcher, but the pain caught me again and I fell back.

"Carry him up to the sick bay," the medical officer told them.

Upstairs in the sick bay the wireless was on and the patients were sitting up in bed. Other patients, wearing hospital blues, were sitting in arm-chairs round the stove. All looked round as I was carried in.

A nurse came up with some pyjamas. Screens were erected round a bed and behind these I managed to get undressed, holding myself upright by hanging on to the bedrail. It took me some time, but I managed to do it in the end. I was damned if I'd let anyone else undress me. Then I got into bed. I could hardly breathe at all by this time. When the sister brought me a glass of something to drink and I tried to

say thank you, only a whisper came out. I thought I was dying for sure, and I should have been frightened, but I wasn't. I felt too weak and too tired to be frightened. I lay back in the cool sheets and went off to sleep almost at once.

I woke up to find the M.O. standing by my bed. I opened my mouth to speak and the sister thrust a thermometer into it. The thermometer was withdrawn just at the moment when I felt I must spit it out or choke and the M.O. said : " Off with your jacket. Let's have a look at you."

He put on his stethoscope and listened through it to my chest. " Say ninety-nine." " Ninety-nine." My voice sounded a little louder since I'd had a sleep. The M.O. said " H'm."

He applied the stethoscope to my back next. " Take a deep breath." I did. It hurt and made me cough, and coughing tore something inside me. I tried to cough as gently as possible, but still it hurt. The M.O. said " H'm " and again commenced to tap my chest with his two fingers. I'll say this for him, I didn't like him, but he could get more sound out of my chest with his two fingers than any M.O. who's examined me before or since. He got a terrific sound out of it. Through the stethoscope it must have sounded deafening. He took the stethoscope off again and said " All right." Then he walked away out of earshot with the Sister and started to give her some instructions. I hoped he wasn't telling her to have me chucked out. I didn't feel able to move.

I watched him walk out and then two nurses came up and started to raise me from the pillows. I thought I was going to be forcibly ejected, but I was wrong. A third nurse came and banked up a lot more pillows behind me. Between them they strapped me bolt upright to a wooden rest and put a bolster between my legs, like the Dutch wife you read about in books about the east.

" Is that comfortable ? " they asked. I nodded. It wasn't comfortable, but I felt too weak to argue. I went to sleep again straightway. Later I woke up in a sweat and the wireless was on. I'd been hearing it in my sleep ; it was playing full

blast. The patients were having tea, digging marmalade out of a tin. I didn't want any tea. I'd acquired a distaste for the thought of food and in particular for the thought of chocolate and Horlick's: formerly my staple diet at break-times. But they didn't seem to expect me to eat, so that was all right. I didn't feel like smoking either, which was a minor miracle, because ordinarily not a day passes but I smoke at least thirty cigarettes, excluding a few occasions when for some reason or other I've not had any cigarettes to smoke.

The man in the next bed to me was smoking, and the smoke from his cigarette, blowing across at me, smelt like cabbage soup, and I knew that if I lit one it'd taste like that, too, and I didn't mean to try it. I had a drink of barley water that the Sister brought me, and then they fixed a hot poultice on my chest, that smelt strongly of aniseed.

I went back to sleep, or rather I dozed and once I woke or dreamt that I woke, I don't know which. My eyes were open, I'm certain of that. I could see the patients in blue walking up and down, but they didn't seem to make any sound; it was as though I were not really there, but looking at a silent film of them or seeing them through glass. I wondered if perhaps I'd died without knowing it. I once read a book where a man died in a hospital ward and afterwards he could see the whole of the ward and the people moving about and bending over his own dead body. I wondered dimly if this had happened to me, but on the other hand the man who wrote the book had never died himself, so he couldn't really know how you felt afterwards. Anyhow, it was like that at first; I could see them in front of me, but they seemed simultaneously at a distance, and then bit by bit I could hear the wireless. It kept fading in and out as though someone was fooling with the set, but I could see it and nobody was anywhere near. It faded on and off, IN and OUT, IN and OUT, OUT and IN, and the people I was seeing began also to fade in and out with the sound, like watching a series of lap-dissolves, and then there was a final fade-out and I woke next

in the middle of the night, everyone in the ward asleep and the lights turned low, and I couldn't remember where I was at first. I felt terrible.

I looked round and saw something sitting by my bed watching me, a shape with some kind of head-dress on, and I knew at once that this was Death waiting patiently his chance. Or her chance: it seemed to be a woman. Well, why not? Somerset Maughan portrayed Death as a woman, and I couldn't see anything against it. I began to feel a bit frightened then, but I thought perhaps it didn't really matter because if I died then I shouldn't presumably feel so terrible.

By the time I thought that, my eyes had got accustomed to the dark and I saw it wasn't in fact Death watching me, but the night Sister.

"Can't you sleep?" she whispered to me.

"No," I said. "I feel awful."

"Sick?"

"Yes." I didn't have to keep my voice down as she was doing; it was a natural whisper.

"I've got some tablets for you to take," she said. With her arm around me I managed to sit up and take the tablets; they were washed down with barley water. She turned the pillows and bunched them up again behind me, but I still couldn't sleep. It was a terrible feeling of nausea that I had, but it wasn't really like wanting to vomit; I can't describe what it was like. Later I began to shiver, although I wasn't cold. I just shivered and I had a cold sweat on me. The night Sister kept smoothing the hair from my forehead, which she couldn't have liked doing because it was damp and clammy and horrible.

"You're awfully good to me," I whispered when finally I'd stopped shivering.

She said, "It's nothing." She smiled and I could see her teeth gleam white against her face in the dark. I still couldn't sleep, and then I could, and when I woke the eight o'clock news was on and they were all having breakfast.

The feeling of nausea had subsided and also the pain, but

later when I sat up they were there again and I started to retch. I tried to hold it back because it hurt, but I couldn't and the nurse fetched me a bowl. What I brought up felt like blood and I looked in the bowl and it was. It was mostly dark, almost black, but there were some bright scarlet threads mixed with it as well, and it was blood all right.

When I saw the blood I got a little scared, but the nurse said there was no need. "It's quite usual in cases like yours," she said. I was relieved by that; I'd have hated to do anything irregular. I was so relieved I coughed up quite a blob more blood without minding at all.

The coughing hurt and exhausted me, but I felt much better afterwards. Then the two nurses sponged my face and hands. they wouldn't let me do a thing myself. They even combed my hair for me. "You mustn't exert yourself," they said.

"What about shaving?" I said.

They said: "You'll have to grow a beard."

Then the M.O. came round. He looked at the blood in my sputum bowl without much interest and asked me a string of questions. Had I ever had chest trouble before? Was there any chest trouble in my family? Did I feel any better to-day? The answer to all these questions was No. I felt too exhausted to add Sir, but the M.O. didn't seem to mind. Perhaps he wasn't really so bad after all.

When he'd gone they put another poultice on me; it was very hot and seemed to bring the pain out through my back. They gave me two more tablets; I went to sleep. I woke and felt sick again. It was like that all day.

During the afternoon Brailowsky came round. He was a Russian boy naturalised British, but not related, so far as I know, to the pianist called that. I liked him, and we used to argue about the way Russian slang should be translated into English and also, because he was Russian, about the soul. But that afternoon when he came I didn't feel like arguing about the soul. I had one of my lap-dissolve periods on and the face of Brailowsky, seen as if through glass, seemed to

recede and advance, dissolving and re-forming, in and out, in and out, out and in. I couldn't talk; he sat by the bed awhile and then tiptoed away. I slept.

Next morning I felt better. The news was all about Hess and how he'd landed by parachute and all the patients were talking about Hess and how the bust-up in Germany was coming for sure and the war'd be over by Christmas, you mark my words.

There were too many patients for me to sort them all out, but I noticed that one of them had his face painted a bright orange. I'd noticed this before, but thought it was part of my delirium. Now I saw it was real; he had some spots on his face and the stuff they put on turned him this peculiar colour. He looked extraordinary; he was a New Zealander, someone told me.

Well, there they were, talking about Hess, and after this the wireless continued to be Hess, and it was also a little Roosevelt and dance tunes, "Falling Leaves," and "There I Go" and "Yes, My Darling Daughter," and when I hear these tunes again I shall remember the Reception Station and the poultice drawing out the pain gradually, the orange-faced New Zealander and the tablets that were known as M. and B.

They always made me feel sick and the days were divided up by the times I took them and there were also poultice-changing, temperature-taking, barley water and broth. Then there was sweating and sleeping and coughing, less and less blood by degrees, and the tablets made me feel less sick as time went on.

The nights, when I began sleeping better, were my best time because then the night Sister was on duty. I knew all the sisters by now; the fair, wispy one who was engaged to a subaltern in the eighth, the spectacled, talkative one, the tall, thin, dark one, and the two nurses: the short, dour Scotch one and the grey, elderly, tired one. They were all very sweet and kind to me, but best of all I liked the night Sister.

She was not beautiful; there's a temptation to think of her as beautiful because I was sick and she nursed me, but I like

to remain a realist, and she was not beautiful, no. She was a big dark girl with a cloud of dark hair under her coif and she had very white teeth. In the night I sometimes woke and I was frightened. I'd not been frightened at first because I was too weak, but later I was, and seeing her sitting by the bed used to stop me being frightened at once. She had also to wake me during the night to give me two of the tablets and she always did this by stroking my forehead.

"Why do you stroke my forehead to wake me?" I asked her once.

"I want you to think you're at home and wake up happy," she said.

"No one wakes me like that at home," I told her.

"Not your girl?"

"No. I haven't a girl."

"Surely you must have a girl."

"No, I haven't."

"You're a poor lonely boy," she said.

"No," I said. "I'm poor, but I'm not lonely. I'm hardly ever lonely."

"Ssh," she said. "We're talking too loud. We'll wake the others."

Then I'd take the tablets and go off to sleep quite happily. The nights were like that, and in the morning she was gone and there was Bing Crosby and the Morning Star on the radio and afterwards Hess.

Now I was better; I no longer coughed up blood, and one day the Sister showed me the thermometer and it was down to normal. I used to lie there and sometimes read, and I used to think of all the sick leave I'd get when I got out of hospital.

I knew now I'd got pneumonia; at first I didn't care what I'd got, but later I became curious and got the orange-faced man to turn round the chart that hung on the end of my bed and this said PLEURISY AND PNEUMONIA. I remembered the company clerk who'd gone down with German measles and how they gave him seven days, and if you got given seven days for

measles what'd you get for pneumonia? My mind soared to dizzy heights of sick leave. Twenty-eight days? Two months? The camp with its dust and heat and the C.S.M. shouting seemed agreeably remote—almost a thing of the past. A month anyway, I thought. They can't give me less than a month. I felt so bucked at the thought of a month that I even felt hungry for the first time and ate a piece of chicken cut up into tiny little squares. Hess was having chicken, too, we heard.

Then one morning I'd been asleep and I woke and there was the colour-sergeant rattling a bag of coins and grinning at me; the company commander was with him. It was Friday; I'd been ill for almost a week.

"Here's a quid for you," the colour-sergeant said. "Better take it while you can. They'll only pay you eight and six when you shift to the hospital proper."

So I took the quid and they went round the ward rattling the bag of money. Everyone woke up when they heard it, even the man who'd been carried in nearly dying of something the day before woke up, and all got paid out.

That afternoon Brailowsky came again. He had some news for me.

"D'you remember Collins? In No. 7 Platoon?"

"The one with glasses?" I remembered Collins; he was a country lad and not too good on drill—he just couldn't seem to grasp it somehow.

"A terrible thing happened this morning," Brailowsky said. "He had his eye put out; he was blinded. We were on bayonets and a scabbard slipped. It was the corporal's actually, Corporal Evans. It struck Collins and broke his glasses into his eye. It was awful."

"I should think it was," I said. "Poor devil."

"If only he hadn't worn glasses he'd have been all right. It was the glass breaking that did it really."

"How awful," I said. "Did he faint?"

"No, he was conscious all the time. The corporal's awfully cut up about it."

" Where is Collins now ? "

" At the town hospital. He's to have an operation."

" Well, there's one thing," I said, " he'll get his ticket."

" Oh, yes, they'll give him that, I should think. And you, d'you think you'll get yours ? "

" No such luck."

Then we talked about the soul. Tolstoy was mentioned, and Dostioevsky. We both got a little exalted and in the end Brailowsky was asked to leave by the sister in charge. He said he'd be back. I felt a little less exalted when he'd gone and I thought a bit about Collins ; I thought principally poor bastard. Anyway, he'd be out of the army, that was one good thing, but was it worth losing an eye for ? I decided not.

On the Sunday after that I was moved. There was no warning ; the M.O. suddenly came round about midday and said I was to go to the town hospital that morning. Immediately I was carried out to the ambulance on a stretcher. It was lovely weather and the sun felt good on my face, but I was worried because I hadn't said good-bye to the night Sister. Later, though, she came round to the town hospital, and I saw her there, and when I came out finally I went to look her up, but she'd been transferred and I never saw her again.

At the town hospital they had huts adjoining it for the military, and I was in one of these. When they carried me in there was lunch going on, and I was hungry. I asked for something to eat.

" Bread and milk," the nurse told me. " You can have some bread and milk if you like."

" They're eating stew. Why can't I have some of that ? "

" Not until the doctor's seen you."

" But I'm eating normally now, nurse. I've had no lunch. I'm hungry."

" Well, you can't have anything till the doctor comes."

" When will that be ? "

" About three o'clock."

" Oh Christ."

The nurse was a little shocked. She went away and I

watched them eat the stew. Later the nurse returned with some junket. I didn't like junket; I told her so. She said I ought to be glad of anything I could get these days.

Then there was an altercation when she took down my particulars. She wanted my mother sent for. I said I didn't want her worried and it all ended in this nurse not liking me. I was surprised at the difference in atmosphere. Of course, these were not V.A.D.s; they were trained nurses, and there's the difference between amateur and professional; it's something like that, and there were also more regulations and less food, as I found out later.

The doctor came round about half-past three, and it was a woman doctor. The first thing she did was to knock off the tablets. She said I was progressing satisfactorily. I said could I have something to eat; she said of course. So I ate bread and jam for tea and later stew.

The hut was a long one and stretched down a perspective of beds to long french windows leading on to a lawn. The end beds by the french windows were not filled except one that had a man who had fits in it. We were always waiting for him to have one, but he didn't; we thought he was a washout. Most of the patients were up and about; they used to get free passes to go to the cinema in the afternoons, but at mealtimes they always reappeared and there was a scramble to sit down at the long table that ran down the middle of the room, and the bed patients sat agitatedly up and made desperate signals to the nurses to make sure they didn't get overlooked.

Everyone was always hungry because, although the hospital took military patients, they still had civilian rations and food was scarce. One day we had a major who shouted at us that we were under military discipline and any man misbehaving himself'd damn soon find it out. But we were not interested in discipline; we were interested in food. The food remained unmilitary and we were hungry all the time.

The food we got was mainly vegetable stew with a few shreds of meat in it and beans abounding. The beans had an effect

on us that was embarrassing when the matron came round at night; it was like crackers going off all the way down the ward. At each explosion the matron would give a little start as if stung. From the beds behind would come giggles smothered by blankets and a fresh salvo burst out in front, so the matron was caught between two fires, so to speak; it was amusing but embarrassing for everybody.

That was in the evenings; in the mornings there was the wireless, which was now altogether Roosevelt and sometimes Bing Crosby; Hess had fizzled out. Roosevelt made a rousing speech; it was terrific, and the patients all said the war'd be over by October, but some still stuck to Christmas; they were pessimists. With the wireless went washing, and now that I was stronger, shaving, and there was also Yes or No.

At the Reception Station Yes or No had been considered a rhetorical question, but here the nurses began to ask it with increasing urgency, and one came round with potions and pills and various kinds of purges on a trolley. I took a yellow-coloured medicine and several pills without result and they began talking about dynamite.

When I did at last get going it was quite an adventure. The lavatory was just outside the ward, and to get to it you had to pass eight beds. This took me fully five minutes; it was the first time I'd been up. My body felt as light as a blown feather and my legs as though the laws of gravity had altered. I had to look down to make sure that my feet were in fact touching terra-firma. I refused the offer of a stick and a nurse's arm. I set off to float down the ward on my own, the other patients cheering me on. As my head seemed also independent and a separate entity, it was an exhausting experience and tired me out for the rest of the day.

The afternoon was merely an interlude between dinner and tea, and during it there was a blanket bath, which I did myself, and rubbing methylated spirit on my body, which was done by a nurse. I was always embarrassed by this, especially since the nurse who did it was a good-looking one. She was

a well-set-up girl, and I used to watch her walking down the ward with detachment, and then one day it was no longer with detachment, and I knew then that I was getting definitely better.

Every day after that I got steadily better, and now that the pain had entirely gone and the doctor said the lung was almost healed, I had great pleasure in breathing; every time I breathed my whole body seemed to expand, and it was very pleasant. I could feel my blood circulating freely and I felt very strong; it was always astonishing that when my feet touched the floor I felt dizzy and so weak I could hardly stand.

Sometimes I was allowed to get up and sit in a chair by the stove, which was not lit now as it was the middle of May and warm weather. I used to send out all the time for food; one of the up-patients got it for me. The colour-sergeant's quid soon went, and I ate always with tremendous appetite.

The orange-faced man turned up, but now you couldn't see his face because the new treatment he had caused it to be swathed in bandages, and he looked like the Invisible Man in the film before he actually became invisible.

And then Collins turned up. He didn't see me at first, but I saw him; he had a black patch over his eye and looked really none the worse. I heard what was said when his doctor came round. We each had separate doctors, and his was a doctor who considered it his duty to demobilise the army, or at any rate such part of it as came under his care. I heard him tell Collins that he'd been recommended for discharge and Collins mutter something in his slow country voice, but he didn't seem pleased about it; he seemed just indifferent. Later he saw me and we had a talk.

"How'll you like getting your ticket?" I asked him.

"Oh, I dunno. I ain't so keen. I dunno as I want it really."

"You don't want it!"

"I ain't all that keen. 'Course I wouldn't mind getting home for the harvest, but still."

I was astounded. I knew that if I'd been blinded in the

army I'd expect my ticket and probably a pension as well. I looked at him and thought he took it so calmly he must have more guts than I had. But then I knew it wasn't guts; it was just that he hadn't the imagination—if something happened to you and you didn't imagine, it had not really happened and even the tangible loss of an eye did not entirely happen until it'd been fully imagined. Well, in his case he was better off like that—and who wants imagination, anyway.

I looked at Collins standing there with his black patch and in his hospital blues that were rather too big for him; the sleeves hung down over his hands.

"Well," I said, "it looks as though you'll get your ticket whether you want it or not."

"Ar," he said. "Well, I don't mind much either way."

I watched him walk back to his bed, and later Corporal Evans came, the one who'd done it to him by accident, and I watched the corporal come walking down the ward with a look on his face as though he were going into action; he was Welsh and emotional, and you could see he was all worked up about it.

Collins was sitting on his bed and he stood up and slowly grinned.

"Hullo, Corp," he said.

I couldn't hear what Corporal Evans said, but I could see Collins wince at the grip his hand got; it must have nearly cracked the bones. Then they sat down and talked. Corporal Evans gesticulated a lot, and I could see Collins shaking his head slowly from time to time. They talked for quite a while, and when Corporal Evans got up to go he seemed tremendously relieved. He left the ward with a shout of laughter and at the door he turned back to wave a hand at Collins. "So long, lad!"

"So long, Corp," Collins said, and he sat there on the edge of his bed for some time afterwards smiling to himself, and I couldn't tell what he was thinking about; perhaps he wasn't really thinking at all.

That afternoon, too, Brailowsky came, but Collins was out by

that time; he'd gone to the cinema; it was "All This and Heaven, Too." Brailowsky said I'd been Y listed; it was on orders, twenty-one days in hospital; but as I wasn't an N.C.O. it made no difference to me, I had no stripes for them to strip.

Brailowsky had brought a book by Turgenev, and he'd brought with him also the same book in Russian. He was showing me how the translation differed from the original Russian when a sudden blood-curdling yell from the end of the ward made us both start round.

The yell proceeded from a bed occupied by an Irishman, who had some kind of stomach trouble. I'd never spoken to him, but I'd never thought that he was really very ill. We looked round and he was sitting up in bed, gaunt and unshaven, with a wild look on his face.

"I want my wife!" he yelled out.

Two of the nurses came running in and immediately went to his bedside, but he waved them away.

"I don't want you; I want my wife. I'm a dying man. I want my wife."

The nurses said something; he wouldn't listen. He started to beat on the bedrail with his hand and to shout over and over again, "I want my wife, I want my wife, I want my wife."

Brailowsky had turned pale. "What's wrong with him?" he whispered. I said I didn't know. I was watching the Irishman. Everyone in the ward was watching him; the patients from their beds and some of the patients who'd got back from the cinema stood watching him and the nurses. The Irishman glared back at them with his eyes starting out of his head.

"I'm dying, I tell ye!" he howled. "I'm dying, and ye can't tell me no different, I know it! I want my wife!"

Suddenly there was a commotion at the other end of the ward. It was the man who had fits; he was having one. The Irishman had evidently upset him. Now attention was divided; our heads kept turning from side to side, and all the nurses made in a body for the man with fits. Screens

went up round his bed in no time, but the Irishman, on the other hand, feeling himself abandoned, began to shriek at the top of his voice; it wasn't pleasant.

"I'm dying, I tell ye, I'm dying! I want my wife! I'm dying, I'm dying! I want my wife, I tell ye! I'm dying! I want my wife! I'm dying, I'm dying! The Mother of God have mercy! I'm dying!"

Brailowsky stood up; he'd gone green in the face. You'd have thought that being Russian he'd have been used to this kind of thing, but evidently the naturalised part of his nature asserted itself suddenly and he couldn't take it. He muttered "So long," and left the ward promptly and with expedition.

The Irishman was on to a new tack now. He pointed a furious finger at the patients who stood gaping round his bedside.

"Aye, ye can stare, all of ye, ye can stare. Take a good look; I ain't afraid to die. The Lord God strike ye where ye stand. May he strike all of ye dead!" He added: "And may a dying man's curse be on ye all!"

More patients came in, attracted by the noise from another ward, and two more nurses; they all stood staring. The Irishman included all these new-comers in his malediction.

"Die, all of ye, die!" he shrieked. "Ye're dead! Why don't ye die?"

He leant forward and waited for them to die. They didn't; they just stood there. The Irishman cast his eyes to heaven and again called on God to strike them dead.

The bed patients further up now began to call angrily down the ward.

"He's loopy! Lock him up!"

"Fetch a straight jacket!"

"Fetch the doctor!"

"Fetch a priest!" this evidently from a fellow Catholic, but delivered in a Scots accent.

The Irishman paid no attention to these exhortations. He was watching the group round his bedside, waiting for them to fall.

"Nothing happens," he muttered after a moment. "Nothing happens." He said this hopelessly, his faith was shattered. He dropped his head in his hands and began to sob.

A doctor now rushed in with a stethoscope dangling round his neck and took instant command of the situation. Up went the screens, and from behind them we could hear the Irishman sobbing brokenly.

"Is he really dying?" I asked one of the nurses, who'd halted by my bed on her way down from the man with fits.

"No," she said, "of course not. He won't die."

"What about his wife?"

"She's in Ireland. Besides, he's separated from her."

The Irishman quietened down after a while, and later he apologised to all of us. It'd been a mistake, he said, the devil had entered into him. We accepted the apology and also the theory of demoniacal possession, but that night the Irishman had a relapse, and this time he kicked over the screens and hit someone, a sergeant, I think. In the morning when we woke he'd been removed, and I don't know what happened to him because shortly afterwards I was moved myself.

I went to a convalescent home, where I remained for three weeks. And I never got any sick leave after all. An A.C.1 had just come out saying that if you went to a convalescent home you couldn't have sick leave; the M.O. at the camp took great pleasure in explaining it to me.

I did get my seven days' privilege leave, which was, anyway six weeks overdue, and they said I was lucky to get even that, because being on light duties I wasn't entitled to any kind of leave without the M.O.'s okay.

When I came back to the camp I saw Collins. He hadn't got his ticket; they'd graded him B.2 and given him a job in the company stores. They gave him also a brand-new glass eye, which he's very proud of; he can even move it about in its socket. The boys all call him Nelson, but he doesn't mind that; he doesn't seem to mind anything at all.

ALL DAY IT HAS RAINED

All day it has rained, and we on the edge of the moors
Have sprawled in our bell-tents, moody and dull as boors,
Groundsheets and blankets spread on the muddy ground.
And from the first grey wakening we have found
No refuge from the skirmishing fine rain
And the wind that made the canvas heave and flap
And the taut wet guy ropes ravel out and snap.
All day the rain has glided, wave and mist and dream,
Drenching the gorse and heather, a gossamer stream
Too light to move the acorns that suddenly
Snatched from their cups by the wild southwesterly
Pattered against the tent and our upturned dreaming faces.
And we stretched out, unbuttoning our braces,
Smoking a Woodbine, darning dirty socks,
Reading the Sunday papers—I saw a fox
And mentioned it in the note I scribbled home;
And we talked of girls and dropping bombs on Rome
And thought of the quiet dead and the loud celebrities
Exhorting us to slaughter and the herded refugees;
Yet thought softly, morosely of them, and as indifferently
As of ourselves and those whom we for years
Have loved and will again
To-morrow maybe love; but now it is the rain
Possesses us entirely, the twilight and the rain.

And I can remember nothing dearer or more to my heart
Than the children I watched in the woods on Saturday
Shaking down burning chestnuts for the school-yard's merry play,
Or the shaggy patient dog who followed me
Through Sheet and Steep and up the wooded scree
To the Shoulder o' Mutton where Edward Thomas brooded long
On death and beauty—till a bullet stopped his song.

ALUN LEWIS.

STORMY DAY

O look how the loops and balloons of bloom
Bobbing on long strings from the finger-ends
And knuckles of the lurching cherry-tree
Heap and hug, elbow and part, this wild day,
Like a careless carillon cavorting;
And the beaded whips of the beeches splay
And dip like anchored weed round a drowned rock;
And hovering effortlessly the rooks
Hang on the wind's effrontery as if
On hooks, then loose their hold and slide away
Like sleet sidewards down the warm swimming sweep
Of wind. O it is a lovely time when
Out of the sunk and rigid sumps of thought
Our hearts rise and race with new sounds and sights
And signs, tingling delightedly at the sting
And crunch of springless carts on gritty roads,
The caught kite dangling in the skinny wires,
The swipe of a swallow across the eyes,
Striped awnings stretched on lawns. New things surprise
And stop us everywhere. In the parks
The fountains scoop and flower like rockets
Over the oval ponds whose even skin
Is pocked and goosefleshed by their niggling rain
That frocks a naked core of statuary.
And at jetty's jut, roped and ripe for hire,
The yellow boats lie yielding and lolling,
Jilted and jolted like jellies. But look!
There! Do you see, crucified on palings,
Motionless news-posters announcing
That now the frozen armies melt and meet
And smash! Go home now, for, try as you may,
You will not shake off that fact to-day.
Behind you limps that dog with tarry paw,
As behind him, perfectly-timed, follows
The dumb shadow that mimes him all the way.

W. R. RODGERS.

ELEGY ON A HILL

Floating in summer his body lies
In state, like a great prince amongst the lilies
And roses of death. Beetles bringing
Thunder, leaves spinning, birds singing
Elegies—all these like pilgrims come
To smash their crystals at his tomb.

Breaking from sleep he rose this morning
From the low meadows and like a burning
Martyr with great ceremony
Threw his body down upon this chimney
Of Kent. The smoke went up
With a light explosion from his lip.

This was his end. They say great sweetness
Comes forth from the strong in their completeness.
But never, I think, will summer brand
Fortune and failure into his hand
Now. Nor shall evening bring
More than bells and the dew falling.

Now his memorial is grass and stone
For we have no time to bury him at noon.
But later when the battle has been done
We shall remember him, a sudden pain
In our sides. What we forget
History shall then commemorate.

O father, let him lie now like a saint.
O mother, into this solitude he went
Long ago as a child and never came
Back to your human voice calling his name
All night. O world, he lies
Blinded. Close up his eyes.

JOHN HALL.

LAMENT

Down by the drumming autumn of the river
Is a griever's evening, cracker of crazy leaves,
Is fire-snap, whip-snap, is bright weather dancing:
Is a swan-reft river, inconsolably grieves.

Is suave his image high from drowning river,
High from these nodding branches and green pools,
This swan, whom waters of my desolation
Would sully sky for, but this not consoles.

Would say these waters do like salt sea lap
For a smooth rock, that is ribs and is lips;
Is a salt-crusted autumn, with salt-crisp leaves
Are sea that crackles and loops and whips.

Say autumn and ocean, swan and rock, are all
But other truths for other images:
My swan or rock whom broke my truth against
I must pursue my water's truth, he says.

Now lap and ebb on this receding shore
Whose grains no grip have, nor no surging breast
For to arrest my tide or breast my river:
To me it was never given, ever, to have rest.

G. S. FRASER.

POEM

Out here on the sea I hear the wind and the night
Ruffle the hair of the dead, the beat
Of black wings among the stars
Hearing the dirl of ship and wave
Only hearing, hearing the snore of the sea
The gurgle of ocean in drowned women is it, I hear
The wind or the wave or the night or the dead
The dead who suck at my ears with the wind
The eyeless priest and the gored nun
Sleeping deep in the slime of the tomb
Or the wail of a hanged monk
Over the rumble of wheels
In the bowels of the sea, the spiked
And spitted souls of children crying through the fog ?
But here I am hearing the storm-wind sing in my bones
Meaning business, and I am glad, I'm listening, listening.

TOM SCOTT.

THE ARMOURED VALLEY

Across the armoured valley trenched with light
Cuckoos pump forth their salvoes at the lark,
And blackbirds loud with nervous song and flight
Shudder beneath the hawk's reconnaissance :
Spring is upon us, and our hopes are dark.

For as the petal, and the painted cheek
Issue their tactless beauties to the hour,
We must ignore the budding sun and seek
To camouflage compassion and ourselves
Against the wretched icicles of war.

No festival of love will turn our bones
To flutes of frolic in this month of May,
But tools of hate shall make them into guns
And bore then for the piercing bullet's snout
And through their pipes drain all our blood away.

Yet though by sullen violence we are torn
From violet couches as the air grows sweet,
And by the brutal bugles of retreat
Recalled to snows of death, yet Spring repeat
Your annual attack, pour through the breach
Of some new heart your future victories.

LAURIE LEE.

STRANGE IS THE WISDOM

Strange is the wisdom where the waters end
And endings are the sweet and sorrowful,
Cast all your fountain dead and strain away
Wine from the wounded casket.
All our day runs and is wistful,
Our day whom time renounced along
With many waitings and our days full dead.

So from the morning take the wind and song
Take all my wounds away, take my frail love,
Where, from the echoing heart, the life has fled,
Faltered and fallen and the song away.

We were the futile, we the young with power
Counting our many pleasures for the instant wrong,
And for our folly, O glorious of youth,
We pay our bitter penny and are dumb
Like children robbed of summer's song
And robbed, O bitterness of youth, of love.

Strange is the wisdom where the waters end
But water runs to stream and stream to sea,
And sea, dark as the mystery of death,
Sinks down to ocean where our ships are lost
On some horizon of our wishful end.

Strange is the wisdom where the waters end.

EMANUEL LITVINOFF.

LAGER

I want to effect the retreat of the snail
to drown myself in the sea's sad silence;
I want to effect the mastery of fishes
who travel without star or compass.

I want to forget that the dead are lonely
that the meatless skull has demands on the soil,
has a habit of asking water
with an eye to the growing clover on the chin.

I want to achieve the retreat to the desert
to the vast warmth of illimitable spaces;
I want before morning to make a momentary
reconciliation with silence.

To-morrow the guns will renew their rumour,
to-morrow the captains will speak with arrows,
to-morrow the duty of battledress blouses
to foster the faces nailed down by death.

But now I want the lament of ocean
which will rest its elbows on upholstered shores
and in secret whisper sadly to the mountains
personal tales of the power of storm.

Now to achieve the retreat of crocus
laying its head in winter's woollen lap,
which gathers strength for to-morrow's flowering
to-morrow lifts, grows, splits the earth.

ALAN ROOK.

POEM

Curlew sees the dale deep—
gashed among the folding fells,
haze-hung and musical with steep
and stony waters.
Desire fills
the afternoon ; the inscrutable hills
creep round, their blue-veined
limbs waiting the birth of love
(After the intolerable sun the rain)

Dim miles below, the train dives
into the mountain, furrowing darkness.
(On Whernside the wind crushes the grass)

The moment gutters out, and daylight breaks
drably in on passion; the hills are lead,
and the cold rising wind backs
east until the whelmed sun is dead.

There's dear pain in love, or living
would be too easy ; the aching rapture
breeds the sick morning, the labour
of life, prelude of new possessing.
(All winter, the rock-fresh
springs swell silently into the wild
April laughter of a green world)

And if the moment's not eternal, what far joy
springs from the possession of this remembered day.

ROBIN ATTHILL.

THE FROST WAS HARD

The frost was hard those days, the sunlight clean
Each morning on the snow, and every night
Our footsteps rang like iron on the road
As, walking homeward through the misty air,
We kept the mist of breath about us. You
Remember still, thawing the frozen pipes
With cans of boiling water?
To be sure
That frost was hard for you and me, but now
The long sobs of the dying afternoon
Are caught and choked in autumn's throat. The leaves,
Made fools of by the black heart of the wind,
Skelter along the pathways. In the west
The flickering furnace glows more cold, and there
Beyond the mountains desolately stretch
The bitter marshes under the empty sky.

Where can we find the water now, to thaw
These frozen seas of blood, that superfused
With blood fresh-flowing, congeal about the heart?
The generous impulse in the arteries
That circulate between us, has not flagged
On either side. For that and all it means
My gratitude is inarticulate
And best employed to keep those channels free
Through all the darkness of this winter night.

MAURICE JAMES CRAIG.

OXFORD, A REVISITING

In this forsaken territory of love,
down long-forgotten avenues of stress,
my buttress, time, is broken down,
heart flutters with the flutter of a dress,
and in the strangers of this town
remembers oddly-piquant glances;
recalls at her repeated gestures
movements that have stirred vast longings,
and still stir queerly what the years
had buried with their trite belongings.
Each corner brushes with its sanctity
the coarsened nerves which once bled there,
and intolerable laughter sings
at the recollection of a broken stair:
soft power to the heart's deep centre brings,
revealing what the eye had not the will
to falsify; some things can be eternalised.
Beyond proportion's tidy laws are seized.

JOHN BATE.

COUNTRY TOWN IN WAR-TIME

Red-tiled Sunday is spotted with moss,
Bulging houses topple across
Streets full of straw and dry manure
Trod by the feet of the Sabbath pure;
Air is solid with war and thunder—
The seamless sky will not always endure
Its angry scab, will crack asunder
In livid blue, and everywhere under
Will sag and quail in the threshing rain;
But to-day the world's uneasy peace
Worships a jauntily-angled cross,
And tells its broken beads again.

VIC TURNER.

EVENING IN CAMBRIDGE

Silhouette of elms against an eggshell evening.
The green Cam slithers beneath me, the yellow girl
Rubs my shoulder, and the uniforms in blue
Direct their dummies to the ultimate kill.

Worn corners of cloisters. Walls and turrets
Supporting space. The inexplicable voids of age.
But heavy feet are fettered; under the gateways
Shadows shining like iron maintain their siege.

Skies snow black rooks upon the leafless trees.
The jackdaws rustle to sleep on studious houses.
Mass-souled, the starlings throb towards the fen,
To the night that brings more deadly wings than theirs.

What Marxian spectre lays its beard on the evening?
What twilight have we committed? What blank sin
Broken upon the earth to rage for pardon?
What blood drips what inexpiable stain?

The boys that are marked to die, and the mad women
Driving their lovers to death for a cheap song,
And the men who will be leaded names on monuments;
Passing, these cannot solve the brooding evening's wrong.

And watching the fading colours, the dimmed horizon,
The white faces becoming vague under the shadow,
I see an age that will not end for many
Draw its own death like a blind across a window.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.

THE TARN

I have heard crack the warning
Ice, alone,
By the uncertain track
Scotched on bare stone.

I have traversed the screes,
Been aware of
The cairn beyond the next cairn,
The menace in a sheep's cough.

The snaring bog,
The threat of nightfall,
The sniper's cue
In the snipe's call.

The whisper like a silence
In the hollow of the force
That booms over the cleft ledge,
Bombarding its course.

The alert crag,
The skulking mist:
Is it behind that or this,
The clenched unflinching fist?

What is it?
What is there?
On startled heels
I challenge the blank air.

Stockstill. Take my bearings; I know
Every quarry in the valley, every chock
—stone in the gully, every gutter in the ghyll...
I do not know that rock.

I faltered ;
Turned back.
Sought cover beside a dyke,
Or a friendly haystack.

Now does the blarney of summer
Allay my doubt ;
From the bright bracken
The snake looks out.

In the blue night sky
Above the bilberry knoll,
The unthawed stars
Point to the wintry Pole.

I have fled to the lowlands,
Called my thoughts in ;
Entrenched between houses,
I have saved my skin.

But on the skyline
The gaunt fell
Taunts me with slate shoulders,
And I know well.

I shall break this truce,
And one day again
I shall go to the tarn,
Black with rain.

The unknown I shall know
'Though how to do
May take all my living to learn
Or dying too.

NORMAN NICHOLSON.

PRACTICAL BALLAD

The site: choose a dry site.
Avoid building against a bank.
Leaning a building to a bank may save putting up a wall,
But dampness will seep through,
you'll see your mortar sweat,
you'll be feeding to keep your pig warm,
this way she'll not fatten, profitably;
you may get roast out of it, but no bacon.

The size: Floor eight foot by eight foot good—
and slope off to a gutter;
pig's urine swells the bean pods; cover from flies.
Height: that is your problem, your comfort,
for it is you who have to get in and fling the dung out,
at least once a week, this is most important.

Now is the time to be generous.
Throw the straw in, not one wad, but two, three, four—
The more straw the more dung,
The more dung the more straw, eventually.
Oh, cover the pig, she'll trample it.

As to the door, observe the stable and copy that;
Make it of seasoned wood that won't warp as mine did.
Don't buy a bolt, get a smith to make one—
Strength, not ornament, is necessary.
And that goes for a pig-sty, and poetry.

RONALD DUNCAN.

I

THE WALL

WILLIAM SANSOM

It was our third job that night. Until this thing happened, work had been without incident. There had been shrapnel, a few enquiring bombs, and some huge fires; but these were unremarkable and have since merged without identity into the neutral maze of fire and noise and water and night, without date and without hour, with neither time nor form, that lowers mistily at the back of my mind as a picture of the air-raid season.

I suppose we were worn down and shivering. Three a.m. is a mean-spirited hour. I suppose we were drenched, with the cold hose water trickling in at our collars and settling down at the tails of our shirts. Without doubt the heavy brass couplings felt moulded from metal-ice. Probably the open roar of the pumps drowned the petulant buzz of the raiders above, and certainly the ubiquitous fire-glow made an orange stage-set of the streets. Black water would have puddled the City alleys and I suppose our hands and our faces were black as the water. Black with hacking about among the burnt-up rafters. These things were an every-night nonentity. They happened and they were not forgotten because they were never even remembered.

But I do remember it was our third job. And there we were—Len, Lofty, Verno and myself—playing a fifty foot jet up the face of a tall City warehouse and thinking of nothing at all. You don't think of anything after the first few hours. You just watch the white pole of water lose itself in the fire and you think of nothing. Sometimes you move the jet over to another window. Sometimes the orange dims to black—but you only ease your grip on the ice-cold nozzle and continue pouring careless gallons through the window. You know the fire will fester for hours yet. However, that night the blank, indefinite hours of waiting were sharply interrupted—by an

unusual sound. Very suddenly a long rattling crack of bursting brick and mortar perforated the moment. And then the upper half of that five-storey building heaved over towards us. It hung there, poised for a timeless second, before rumbling down at us. I was thinking of nothing at all and then I was thinking of everything in the world.

In that simple second my brain digested every detail of the scene. New eyes opened at the sides of my head so that, from within, I photographed a hemispherical panorama bounded by the huge length of the building in front of me and the narrow lane on either side.

Blocking us on the left was the squat trailer pump, roaring and quivering with effort. Water throbbed from its overflow valves and from leakages in the hose and couplings. A ceaseless stream spued down its grey sides into the gutter. But nevertheless a fat iron exhaust pipe glowed red-hot in the middle of the wet engine. I had to look past Lofty's face. Lofty was staring at the controls, hands tucked into his arm-pits for warmth. Lofty was thinking of nothing. He had a black diamond of soot over one eye, like the White-eyed Kaffir in negative.

To the other side of me was a free run up the alley. Overhead swung a sign—" Catto and Henley." I wondered what in hell they sold. Old stamps ? The alley was quite free. A couple of lengths of dead, deflated hose wound over the darkly glistening pavement. Charred flotsam dammed up one of the gutters. A needle of water fountained from a hole in a live hose-length. Beneath a blue shelter light lay a shattered coping stone. The next shop along was a tobacconist's, windowless, with fake display cartons torn open for anybody to see. The alley was quite free.

Behind me, Len and Verno shared the weight of the hose. They heaved up against the strong backward drag of water-pressure. All I had to do was yell " Drop it "—and then run. We could risk the live hose snaking up at us. We could run to the right down the free alley—Len, Verno and me. But I never moved. I never said " Drop it " or anything else. That long

second held me hypnotised, rubber boots cemented to the pavement. Ton upon ton of red-hot brick hovering in the air above us numbed all initiative. I could only think. I couldn't move.

Six yards in front stood the blazing building. A minute before I would never have distinguished it from any other drab Victorian atrocity happily on fire. Now I was immediately certain of every detail. The building was five storeys high. The top four storeys were fiercely alight. The rooms inside were alive with red fire. The black outside walls remained untouched. And thus, like the lighted carriage of a night express, there appeared alternating rectangles of black and red that emphasized vividly the extreme symmetry of the window spacing: each oblong window shape posed as a vermilion panel set in perfect order upon the dark face of the wall. There were ten windows to each floor, making forty windows in all. In rigid rows of ten, one row placed precisely above the other, with strong contrasts of black and red, the blazing windows stood to attention in strict formation. The oblong building, the oblong windows, the oblong spacing. Orange-red colour seemed to *bulge* from the black framework, assumed tactile values like boiling jelly that expanded inside a thick black squared grill.

Three of the storeys, thirty blazing windows and their huge frame of black brick, a hundred solid tons of hard, deep Victorian wall, pivoted over towards us and hung flatly over the alley. Whether the descending wall actually paused in its fall I can never know. Probably it never did. Probably it only seemed to hang there. Probably my eyes digested its action at an early period of momentum, so that I saw it " off true " but before it had gathered speed.

The night grew darker as the great mass hung over us. Through smoke-fogged fireglow the moonlight had hitherto penetrated to the pit of our alley through declivities in the skyline. Now some of the moonlight was being shut out as the wall hung ever further over us. The wall shaded the moonlight like an inverted awning. Now the pathway of light

above had been squeezed to a thin line. That was the only silver lining I ever believed in. It shone out—a ray of hope. But it was a declining hope, for although at this time the entire hemispherical scene appeared static, an imminence of movement could be sensed throughout—presumably because the scene was actually moving. Even the speed of the shutter which closed the photograph on my mind was powerless to exclude this motion from a deeper consciousness. The picture appeared static to the limited surface senses, the eyes and the material brain, but beyond that there was hidden movement.

The second was timeless. I had leisure to remark many things. For instance, that an iron derrick, slightly to the left, would not hit me. This derrick stuck out from the building and I could feel its sharpness and hardness as clearly as if I had run my body intimately over its contour. I had time to notice that it carried a foot-long hook, a chain with three-inch rings, two girder supports and a wheel more than twice as large as my head.

A wall will fall in many ways. It may sway over to the one side or the other. It may crumble at the very beginning of its fall. It may remain intact and fall flat. This wall fell as flat as a pancake. It clung to its shape through ninety degrees to the horizontal. Then it detached itself from the pivot and slammed down on top of us.

The last resistance of bricks and mortar at the pivot point cracked off like automatic gun fire. The violent sound both deafened us and brought us to our senses. We dropped the hose and crouched. Afterwards Verno said that I knelt slowly on one knee with bowed head, like a man about to be knighted. Well, I got my knighting. There was an incredible noise—a thunderclap condensed into the space of an ear-drum—and then the bricks and the mortar came tearing and burning into the flesh of my face.

Lofty, away by the pump, was killed. Len, Verno and myself they dug out. There was very little brick on top of us. We had been lucky. We had been framed by one of those symmetrical, oblong window spaces.

I

THE LAND GIRL

DIANA GARDNER

I HAVE Jersey cream for breakfast here on the farm. It is thick enough to spread on my porridge. Unfortunately, there is not enough sugar to go with it because of the rationing, which is rather a curse. What I'd like would be oceans of brown sugar crystals of the kind we used to have at my guardian's. As it is, I have to take it surreptitiously when Mrs. Farrant goes to the kitchen for the kettle. She's very severe and down on landgirls altogether. She's also against me because I'm a "lady," or I am when compared with her. She's a hard-bitten, crusty, thin woman and I don't think she and her husband get on particularly well together. She never calls him by his name or anything else, and refers to him as "Mr. Farrant."

They don't half work the landgirls. You are expected to do a man's work right enough. Not that I mind: it's fun being out in the open all day, even if it is blasted cold. To-day we fallowed a field the size of the hall at college and it took five hours. About mid-afternoon, Mr. Farrant came over and gave me a cigarette. I'm not allowed to smoke at the farmhouse because of Mrs. F., so I have one now and again in the fields. It's decent of him to understand. I should say he's a man of about fifty-six, tall, very thin and his face is lined with tiny red veins. He has whitish hair and blue, amused eyes. I wish he wouldn't wear leather gaiters: they make his legs look far too thin.

"We'll make you into a farmer yet, Miss Una," he said.

I laughed at the idea. If there weren't a war on I'd never be doing landwork. I don't believe I've got the patience. Farming is a dull game: you have to wait so long for things to grow. I like action. It was that which got me expelled from school—I used to sneak into the town to buy sweets after "lights-out." I've also got strong feelings, with decided likes and dislikes. Which reminds me, I don't think I'm going to like Mrs. F. at all.

There's a thick frost to-day. Miller, the cowman, says it

went down to 27 degrees last night. I was late for breakfast because it was so hard getting out of bed. Mr. Farrant was on the farm and Mrs. F. was busy in the scullery. It was quite nice to eat alone. I didn't have to be endlessly on my best behaviour. Believe me I was in a rage when I discovered that Mrs. F. had left only a teaspoonful of sugar in the bowl for both tea and porridge. Mean old pig! I thought. I'll pay you out. Before I went on the farm I upset my tea over the tablecloth.

Miller was detailed for two hours to teach me how to manage the tractor. When the weather breaks we'll be busy. Miller is a bad teacher, or I'm a dud. I expect I shall understand it in time.

Mr. Farrant gave me my lesson this morning. He explains things very well. He took the whole carburetter to pieces and showed me how it worked.

The weather is still mid-winter. To-day I felt very bored, going up and down among the cabbages. If the war goes on much longer I shall be sick of this game. Nobody of my own age to talk to, only the farmhands and their wives, and I bet they laugh and imitate me behind my back. To tell the truth I don't feel I'm all that popular, and this makes me seem affected. Am beginning to wonder why I ever came here at all.

This morning Mr. Farrant took me in his gig to market. The town looked like a Christmas card by Raphael Tuck; people were climbing the hill bent double for fear of falling on the ice, and one or two women wore red woollen caps with lipstick to match.

I enjoy going around with Mr. Farrant. He's a nice old boy and treats me well. He was shy at first about taking me into the "Drovers," because he said I was a lady. It was very hot and farmerish in there. I must say I enjoyed drinking a glass of good old brown ale with the locals. These togs, breeches and coat, etc., are very comfortable. Thank goodness I don't bulge out in the wrong places.

When we got home Mrs. F. didn't seem particularly pleased to see us. She spilled my tea pouring it out, so I refused to thank her for it. When she went to lock up the fowls I am afraid I pulled a face at Mr. Farrant, but he didn't seem to mind.

There has been another fall of snow. My room is in the attic and after Mr. Farrant called me to get up I lay quite a while looking at it reflected on the ceiling.

Practically all day I was clambering about with Miller searching for a pair of ewes which have lambed too early. After we'd found them, Mrs. Miller made tea for us at their cottage. It was the queerest place inside. The "parlour" was fixed from top to bottom with pictures of the seaside, and china "gifts," mostly from Brighton. She was very pleasant and had only two teeth in the top front. I wonder what happened to the others. Miller is a robust, earnest sort of fellow, and good-looking, if you like the earthy type.

Mrs. Farrant made a scene to-day. I have come to loathe her.

When I came in I shook off all the snow I could in the scullery before going into the sitting-room. Mr. Farrant was doing accounts. I could see she was in a vile temper; her hair was screwed into a tighter knot than ever.

I sat in an armchair and took up the *Daily Mail.*

Presently she looked across.

"Why didn't you take off your boots?" she said.

Before answering I laid the paper down very deliberately, and looked her over. "Because I've been out all day on the farm and I'm dog-tired. I shook the snow off as I came in."

"The snow's all over the carpet, and you'll take off those boots," she said.

She came and stood over me so menacingly that my gore rose.

"My good woman," I said. "I haven't taken up farming to be ordered about by you."

"This is my house and I'll be obeyed in it."

"No one could mistake that," I replied curtly, and I admit I looked meaningly at Mr. Farrant.

"You'll kindly leave this room," said Mrs. F. She's certainly got a shrill voice.

"I'm going to, thanks," I said, and I took the *Daily Mail* with me. As I climbed to my room I brushed off as much snow as I could on the stairs.

When I came down for supper I found Mrs. F. had gone to bed. Mr. Farrant was quiet all through the meal. I am afraid he was upset about it all.

Mrs. F. is scarcely civil when I address her now. She has also taken to giving me small helpings at meals. When I object she refers to the strict rationing. I don't believe it; we live on a farm where there's plenty of food, and I tell her so.

This morning she had taken away the cream and left no milk for the porridge. She was making her bed upstairs.

I must say I wouldn't like to have a wife like Mrs. F.

Last night I went to a Temperance Dance with the Millers. Mrs. Miller doesn't dance, so I waggled a toe with him. It was a tiring affair. It's hard to get drunk on lemonade. When we got back to the farm after a three-mile walk through the snow, I found that damned woman had locked me out. All the doors were bolted and the place in darkness. I threw snowballs at Mr. Farrant's window—they have separate rooms—and presently he came down, looking very sleepy, poor man, and let me in.

As I passed her door her room was suspiciously quiet. I am afraid I made no apology for getting him out of bed. He ought never to have married a woman like Flo Farrant.

This morning, when I accused her of locking up the house, she had the rotten taste to reply, "Oh, I thought you'd be out all night."

"What the hell do you mean by that?" I asked.

I think she was frightened because she did not answer.

"Come on," I said. "Explain yourself."

But she wouldn't.

I'm going to get even with her for this.

I spent the whole of to-day carting hay for the cattle. I can't help thinking of what that bitch said yesterday.

It's open war between Mrs. F. and me in this house now. I don't know how Mr. Farrant can put up with it. I talk only to him. Mrs. F. and I have put each other into Coventry.

I must think clearly about this evening to know what exactly happened. I admit I did it in an inexplicable, mad moment and I

suppose I shall live to regret it, but I do feel Mrs. F. is entirely to blame for the atmosphere which has grown up between us.

As it was Sunday she caught the early 'bus into town and went by train to her mother's farm.

She was gone all day.

At lunch-time Mr. Farrant and I got on particularly well together. We laughed a good deal at his jokes and he seemed relieved that she was out of the way, and shy that he and I were alone, which was funny, because around the farm and all the time we are at work he treats me as if I were a sort of refined workman. In the afternoon he dozed, the newspaper over his face and his gaiters off, I was dressed in a frock for a change and feeling no longer a farm labourer.

Over tea we got on still better. I know Mr. Farrant likes me quite a lot; I'm sensible and reasonably attractive. I like him in lots of ways. He's friendly and has a sense of humour.

As I poured the tea, sitting in Mrs. F.'s chair, I must admit I was glad she was out of the house for once.

But not a shadow of what happened later entered my head at any time during the afternoon. I wrote some letters to one or two people I'd met at the agricultural college and amused Mr. Farrant with tales about them. He thought they sounded great jokes.

When supper-time came he insisted that he should prepare it.

"After all, we're both farmers," he said, "so why shouldn't I get a meal for a change."

He opened a tin of tongue and made some sandwiches. The tea was dreadfully strong. Afterwards he smoked some of my cigarettes and told me about his youth. He must have been a lad. Why on earth he had to marry Flo Farrant only the stars can tell.

As she was due on the ten o'clock 'bus, I decided to go to bed before she arrived. Just before nine-thirty, Mr. Farrant made the fire up and went into the kitchen to make some tea. While he was gone I put the room to rights, and presently he returned with a thermos and laid it on the table.

It was then something took possession of me. The sight of the old, chipped thermos on the orange tray and his spent, thin

shoulders bent over it, caused my dislike of Mrs. Farrant to well up into a sudden storm of hatred. I don't remember ever having experienced such rage and no one can accuse me of being sweet-tempered. I felt choked with hatred. As I watched the nape of his neck I gripped the back of a wooden chair so hard that my hands were bloodless. Yet despite the ferocity of this feeling I don't think it could have lasted a second. I relaxed my grip on the chair and sat down.

He looked up, alarmed.

"Are you feeling all right?"

"Yes t-thanks," I stammered.

"Not ill or anything? You're so white."

"It must be the heat of the room," I said, and pulled myself together. I got up. "I'm going to bed."

"Right you are," he said. "I'm turning in, too."

He went into the kitchen and I heard him stoking the "Ideal" boiler.

Suddenly my brain began to work at a great speed. Now that I think about it I suppose my subconscious had already worked out a plan. My movements became swift and furtive. I went quickly to the door, looked to right and left in the hall and then, as softly as I could, sped up the stairs. The way I knew what to do next was quite peculiar. I went straight to Mr. Farrant's bedroom and switched the light on. His bed was over in the corner. I went straight over and lay on it. I even shook off my shoes as I climbed up—a funny thing to do when I had only a a few moments to spare. I could hear him moving about downstairs and I knew the 'bus with Mrs. Farrant in it would be arriving at any minute. I lay on my back and rolled about from side to side to deepen my impression in the feather mattress. It very soon became disordered. Then I got up, took off a blue Tyrolean brooch I always wear and laid it beside his brushes on the dressing-table. Grabbing my shoes in my hand I made my way on to the landing and up the stairs to the attic.

Once in my own room I stood with my head pressed against the door, listening for the sound of his movements. I heard

him lift the lid of the letter-box and let it drop. He paused by the stairs to wind the grandfather clock.

At that moment I heard the 'bus. It pulled up and then started off noisily. Mrs. Farrant was at the gate.

He climbed the stairs softly. I don't think he heard the 'bus. As he came to the linoleum on the landing, his steps grew louder. He crossed to his room and went in.

Hardly breathing, I came out of mine and ran quietly down the stairs. My eyes must have been fixed and frightening. When the front door handle turned, I gave a little gasp; nothing must prevent my plan from succeeding. If I were not wrong, Mrs. Farrant would say good-night to her husband before she drank her tea.

I slipped into his room as quickly and quietly as I could. Once inside I appeared to be in no hurry. He stood in the middle of the room in his shirt sleeves. He appeared not to have noticed the state of the bed, and was staring pensively at his feet. He looked up, surprised.

"I'm sorry," I said, and I can't think what I must have looked like, " but I've left a brooch on your dressing-table." I spoke slowly. "It's a little Austrian brooch my guardian gave me years ago."

I began to play for time.

" Stupid of me to have left it. There it is—on the little china tray "—I heard footsteps on the stairs—in a slightly higher key I said, "On the china tray, beside your brushes."

" Oh," he said, vaguely, and took it up in his hands. He was stupefied and tired. "I don't quite understand," he looked down at it in the palm of his hand and then at me. " How did it get there ? "

But I had no need to reply. Mrs. Farrant stood in the doorway, her dark clothes part of the shadow in the landing, her face compressed and challenging. She looked at her husband, at the brooch in his hand, at me, and finally, at the disarranged bed.

I don't know what I looked like but I can remember a sensation of rising triumph as I met her eyes. He was too befuddled to know what to say and I made no effort to help him.

I waited an age for her to speak, but she said nothing. Her face became completely expressionless. She looked again at the brooch in Farrant's hand and then turned on her heel. We heard her cross the landing to her own room and close the door sharply behind her.

I must confess I didn't know what to do when he turned and looked at me in a bewildered sort of way. I snatched the brooch from his hand and rushed upstairs to my room.

This morning it is still very cold. As I lay in bed unable to sleep, a good deal of noise was going on in the house below. Eventually I got up and stared out at the outbuildings of this blasted farm. Presently, Miller led the pony out and harnessed him to the gig. Almost at once Mrs. Farrant piled it high with some tattered luggage. Without saying anything to Miller she climbed in and jerked the reins. The pony moved forward, through the gate and on to the high road, his breath misty in the frozen morning air. I got cold watching her back-view until it was out of sight; the thin body and that frightful bun. That was the last I shall ever see of her, thank God.

After that I dressed and went downstairs.

As I went into the kitchen with a jauntiness I was far from feeling, Mr. Farrant was making his own breakfast. He looked up with a numbed expression. I had expected reproaches: it put me off my stroke not to get any.

"She's gone," he said, wearily, "Nothing I could say made any difference."

I said nothing.

Here I am waiting for the 'bus. It's so cold I have to run up and down beside my suitcases to keep warm. I am in my best clothes, but I do not know where I am going or what I shall do. All I am certain of is, I must get out of that house.

After all, I couldn't stay there alone with Mr. Farrant. Even though he's been an awful dear to me, he's old enough to be my father. And my life has only just begun.

I

FLETCHER

ROY FULLER

" BUT," say you, " surely there is nothing easier than for one to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and nobody by to perceive them." I answer, "You may so, there is no difficulty in it; but what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in your mind certain ideas which you call books and trees, and at the same time omitting to frame the idea of anyone that may perceive them ? "

Fletcher, a middle-aged bachelor of Jewish ancestry and intellectual tastes, laid the book on the chair arm as he felt, through the cloth of his trousers, a small object brush his calf. He bent over and searched among the hairs of the rug. After a moment he found a smooth pebble, about the size of the top joint of his thumb, covered with a brownish dust. He looked up at the white ceiling, at the fireplace where an electric fire was burning. It was impossible that the pebble should have come from either of those places, but it had fallen that moment; undoubtedly he had felt its descent along his leg.

He put it in his pocket and walked about the small room, which was his library, in and out of the violet glow of the reading lamp. Part of his mind was numb with reading; he did not know whether this made him more or less disturbed about the inexplicable appearance of the pebble. He regarded it, anyway, as mysterious but curious, as he might have observed his own singular behaviour under the influence of a strong emotion.

Soon, the furnishings of the room impinged upon him and he began to remember the events of the day, to marshal subconsciously the happenings of his past life, and he felt himself take shape again as a being who existed in particular space at a particular time. But there remained an excitement which, although subdued and hidden, was subtly affecting his conduct and perception.

It was this which must have made him go to the windows, open them and walk out on the balcony. He leaned his elbows on the stone parapet. There was no moon; the stars, spaced over the dark cap of the sky, burned with a subdued grey glitter. He tried (and he never remembered having done anything of the sort before) to find words to describe the extent and curvature of the heavens, and which would break through the shell of past descriptions—descriptions partially preventing the total effect of the sky from permeating his mind. The feeling he had about what he saw then was primitive and profound, but as soon as he turned away (and saw the long lit boulevard which led to the city) or permitted words to form on his tongue, he felt, blunted by contrast, his normal existence, and he formulated the thought he had had often before—that behind the words he read were realities which mercifully could be symbolised.

As he laid his hands on the windows, intending to go inside and read some lines of Shelley's which the incident had recalled to him, he saw, far along the boulevard, a confused moving mass of light and shadow which brought him out again on the balcony, leaning over into the cool dark air. The start of the wide roadway opposite him was bordered by limes over which light fell from a street lamp. The leaf buds were illuminated, appearing to him like a green veil thrown over the trees. But further away the avenue was indicated by the offices of trusts and banks, their rectangular faces lit by flood lamps, most of them intensely white, a few pink, through which occasionally floated the wisps and coils of a vapour.

The movement he had seen in the distance, though he watched it for some minutes, became no clearer. He thought it at first the haphazard movement of a crowd, and then he later believed he could distinguish the emergence of a procession with torches; at length, as they seemed to move no nearer and his strained eyes began to blur and duplicate the points of light, he turned his back and went inside the room.

He caught sight of his image in the mirror by the side of one

of the bookcases. His face was white and plump, his head bald, flattened a little on top, which in some way seemed connected with the bony droop of his nose over the thin and sharply curved lips. He glanced down from the head to the hands which were already poised to take a book from the shelf, realising how care and deliberation characterised his movements, and he recalled himself as an adolescent remembering, telling himself constantly to be careful and deliberate. Had he consciously formed his characteristics? They were now set and automatic. He wondered slightly about the circumstances which must have determined them; these thoughts were the extension of his quickened mood; he did not remember having thought of his appearance in this way since he was a young man.

He opened the Shelley, and found, disappointingly flat and commonplace, the lines which he had half recollected:

"There is no dew on the dry grass to-night,
Nor damp within the shadow of the trees;
The wind is intermitting, dry and light;
And in the inconstant motion of the breeze
The dust and straws are driven up and down,
And whirled about the pavement of the town."

It was not until he had read them a second time that the words—grass, shadow, trees; words whose infinite undertones he could then appreciate—sprang out of the page, recharging him with the emotion he had felt when he had looked at the sky. Had the verse always the potential power to promote such excitement? Or was the cause of it the delayed effect of the opening lines, obviously richer, more searching?

"The sun is set; the swallows are asleep;
The bats are flitting fast in the grey air"

He was still holding the book when he heard, outside, the clack, faintly at first and then louder, of the heavy boots of marching men. He listened; all the pulses of his body quickened and fluttered. He felt he could not bear any sound

from the other inhabitants of the world, or the sight of any object of nature. Half closing his eyes, he went to the window and drew the heavy curtains. Then he sat in a chair and waited, thoughtless and motionless, for the excruciating sensitiveness to pass. After a few moments the fullness of his chest dissipated a little; it was all he could hope for. . . . It was unfair that he should, at his age, be so roused; forced to permit the fever to shake him with no hope of diverting or harnessing it.

But the noise came nearer; it was in the street outside his house; he heard the loud shutting of the street door, a confusion on the stairs. Finally there were voices in the passage, and three men came into the room, quietly enough but with an air of violence and savagery. They held, as they walked, their arms away from their bodies like apes; their boots, the leather which strapped them, the facets of the metal they wore, gleamed in the light.

Fletcher rose in a graceful, courteous movement, hiding his horror.

"Gentlemen," he said, "what do you want?"

One of the men said: "You know who we are!" He was of medium height, with black hair brushed back from a low ridge in his forehead, black eyebrows, a disfiguring mole on the short lip under one nostril.

"I recognise your uniforms."

"Well, then," said the dark man, "We have come to examine you and to search your premises."

"What have I done?" asked Fletcher. None of them answered him: his bones were aching with despair as though he were experiencing a nightmare which symbolised the inexorability of fate.

"What is your occupation, Fletcher?" said the dark man.

"Give me a little time," said Fletcher. He could hardly manipulate the bellows of his lungs in order to speak. He saw that one of the men was at his desk with a notebook open in front of him. After a minute Fletcher said: "I have no occupation."

" How do you live ? "

" I have investments. I live on the income from them." The man at the desk was writing.

" Are you associated with any political parties ? "

" No."

" Any religious organisations ? "

" No." Fletcher could bear it no longer. He burst out into the scarred, impersonal face of his questioner : " What are you going to do to me ? "

The boy standing by the door laughed. As Fletcher heard the laugh he saw, over the dark man's shoulder, his face in the mirror ; his wide eyes, his slightly open mouth, the ageing skin at his jaw. Death was near him ; to this man, no longer young, death would come. The tension in his head dissolved, and he sank sobbing into a chair. The blow across his face only surprised him. He stood up again, feeling the numb welt of the dark man's cane, nothing else.

" What are those books in the glass bookcase ? "

" They are some first editions I have collected—Le Fanu and others." With his words came the flood of pain from his cheek. The dark man picked up the volume of Shelley from the table, looked at the title, and let the book drop from his hands to the floor. Fletcher saw with anguish the pages flurry open, saw the book hit the polished wood, the pages crumple, a crack of white break along the olive green spine.

He walked, when they had gone, agitatedly up and down the room. Nothing had happened. There was the red weal on his face, the torn book on the floor, but nothing had happened.

He felt as though he had come upon a pit and was standing on its brink, looking into its depths. He walked round and round on the narrow ledge of ground that was left to him. Inside him was the memory, a frightening emptiness, of his cowardice. The furniture, the curtains, the white marble mantelpiece, took on an unfamiliar and deathly look, to

conform with his new realisation of the terror of the outside world. He went stealthily to the window, and looked out. The street was deserted. He could hear nothing.

He made up his mind quickly, recklessly it seemed to him, and ran down the stairs, across the street, into the cold, uninhabited part. He walked first along a broad road which ahead suddenly dipped so that the gravel, brilliant in the rising moon, was contiguous to the sea black sky. The trees rustled on either side. He put his hands in his pockets to warm them. He felt a strange small, smooth object, and drew it from his pocket to discover what it was. He saw that it was a pebble and wondered how it could have got there. The matter was inexplicable.

As though he were being compelled to do so, he kept his eyes on the shining road until they were filled with moisture. He remembered a terror of his boyhood; how, as he lay in bed before going to sleep or upon waking in the night, he searched the dark fearfully for some point of light, some outline which would show that he hadn't gone blind. The pain in his face mounted to an eye socket. His fear grew. He ran off the road, to hide himself among the trees, his feet sinking into the soil. The branches whipped across his face.

The hardness of the trees; the softness of the ground. The space his body occupied between the trees and the ground was distorted; it was curved and immense. And then he realised that the distortion was not in space or in his body; it was the park, the shape of natural things he could barely make out in the dark, which had changed. He felt a sense of calamity which was beyond terror; he began slowly to walk, with resignation, in the altered world.

Before him the trees thinned out and the glitter of the moon, like broken mirror, began to fall through the branches. He came, at length, to a clearing, where the grey blue chalky light filled the air without interruption, and lit the grass. There was a clump of shrubbery.

With a tearing pang at his heart he saw a human body

lying half hidden by a bush. He stopped, frozen. Then, like a sly animal, he crept forward, waiting for the sound of movement which would send him running back through the trees.

It was a girl. She lay on her back, with her pathetic, delicately coloured underclothes revealed by the disarranged skirt. Her arms were twisted under her trunk, a coat thrown across her middle; her shoulders and head were raised a little, supported by a bank of crushed stems and buds. One stone white breast, with a dark stain of nipple and a shadow rounding it, rose free from the loose ribbons, the ripped dress. A narrow scarf bound her chin and half her mouth.

The open, brilliant eyes of this common rape met Fletcher's; on what he could see of the pale face he recognised, as in a glass, what was expected, strange but familiar; the smutted nostrils, the empty expression of the dead.

ALL ONE HAPPY FAMILY

BEATRIX LEHMANN

THE other day I went up to see Uncle Bertie and asked him what he was going to do about the theatrical situation. He isn't really my uncle, but he likes all the hundreds of boys and girls whom he has employed at some time or another to call him uncle because he says that theatrical people are " all one happy family."

Uncle Bertie is immensely fat and he is seldom seen out of his capacious office chair. If he is producing a play, the chair is brought down into the stalls, and by the time the actors arrive Uncle Bertie is already there, firmly soldered into the chair, breathing stertoriously and beaming through his horn-rimmed spectacles like a benevolent owl. He has got a jolly sort of manner, and he has always said that if we will come to him with our troubles, he will smooth them out. As, one way or another, our troubles are closely connected with Uncle Bertie, we do take them up to him. He calls it "Keeping in Touch."

None of us knew how Uncle Bertie started his theatrical career because, unlike most of the big men in the profession, he never boasted of having worked his way up from call-boy, stage-hand or walk-on. None of the older ones amongst us remembered having seen him lurking about the wings in early days. It was more or less taken for granted that Uncle Bertie had sprung, ready-made, chair and all, from the womb of time.

When I first went up to see him, years and years ago, he handed me a contract and said :

" Well, now that you've joined the family, remember the honour of the family must always come first. If you have any little troubles you just come straight to your uncle and he'll smooth 'em out."

" I suppose I'm a sort of poor relation," I said, looking at my contract.

Uncle Bertie laughed a good deal and was very jolly and wise.

"Now look here," he said, "I'll tell you exactly what you are: You're a gamble, and for all I know you represent a dead loss. Well, your uncle's willing to risk that. You do this job and let your uncle see what you're worth, and then at the end of the run we'll have a cosy chat about the future."

I was still reading the contract, trying to figure it out. (Three small speaking parts, four understudies, three weeks' rehearsal without pay, supply my own clothes, two pounds ten shillings for the run and an option for Uncle Bertie to fine me, or sack me; if I burnt a carpet, left a light on, got drunk, gave information to the press, missed a performance, kept livestock in my dressing-room or cooked food over any of the gas jets.)

"I may quite easily be dead before the future comes round," I said.

"If you don't want to work you can do the other thing," he said, and gave me a kiss.

Well, I did the work and—Oh, it's all a long, long time ago now. . . .

I've done a lot of work for Uncle Bertie since that time, and when I was working we were both as pleased as dogs with two tails. When I was out of work I was pretty miserable, but luckily poor old Uncle Bertie didn't have to suffer because he was always taking risks with other nieces and nephews, and if some of them went down the drain, the others repaid him for his courage, and the family grew and grew.

I was often going up to see Uncle Bertie to have my troubles smoothed out—particularly when I was out of work. He really did want to keep the family together and he was always thinking out ways to make us closer and more united. He not only put on the plays in his own theatres, and very often produced them himself, but he also set up in business as an agent, so that when he gave us a job he took back ten per cent. of the salaries he paid us. He was agent also for all the authors

whose plays he put on. Sometimes he wrote for the papers under the pseudonym "Eye-opener," and gave his own productions first-rate notices. He bought any amount of theatres all over the country to house the growing family. If he couldn't get some theatre away from a person, he very often managed to get something out of their bars or advertising, thereby drawing the person into the family circle.

Once he put some of us on three-year contracts at a steady minimum wage and hired us out to other managers at enormous salaries. We became quite light-headed about this until we discovered that Uncle Bertie took the difference between the new salary and the old one in the three-year contract. He said he had to do this to pay himself back for all the time we weren't working for him. Round about this time one of the nieces sued him—I can't remember exactly why, but soon afterwards he dropped the three-year contract idea because he said it only made the family bicker, and it was worth dropping just to keep peace in the home.

There is a particular occasion that sticks in my memory like tar in a dog's paw. I had a lot of trouble and I went up to see if Uncle Bertie could do some smoothing. I had been out of work for several months and my Mum needed to go to hospital. There were quite a few other troubles such as rent, clothes and the telephone every actor has to have. Uncle Bertie listened to it all very patiently and kept patting my hand to help me over the worst bits.

"You ought to have come up before, ducky," he said.

"I thought you hadn't got anything for me, and——" I began, but he interrupted me.

"When it's real trouble your uncle will always find a way. There hasn't been anything in your line or anything that carried your salary—and we must give the beginners a chance sometimes, mustn't we?"

"Oh, yes, everybody must have a chance," I said.

"What do your debts amount to?"

I told him and he looked thoughtful.

"And your mum's hospital fees?"

"If I were working she could go to a good nursing home——"

"Tell you what," said Uncle Bertie, "I've got a little nursing home—run it as a side-line—always had a bit of an itch for surgery—best of everything——"

"How much?"

"Four guineas a week."

"Credit?"

"Oh, no," said Uncle Bertie, shaking with laughter. "No, cash, no cure. But I'll fix it if you'll do something for me—now don't interrupt, there's a duck, and your uncle will tell you all about it. I've got a little repertory scheme up north which isn't going too well. You trot up there, play the leads, put the place on its feet and I'll take care of your troubles."

"What do I get?"

"Five a week—don't interrupt, we're giving each other a helping hand."

"But what about my mum's nursing home?"

"I just told you—I'll see that's paid as regular as a clock. Don't you worry your head about that, you're going to have enough to do turning out a new performance every week and showing those northerners the clever girl your uncle knows you are."

"What about my bills?"

"I'll fix them right away and you pay me back a pound a week—just for the honour of the family."

"But what about your ten per cent.?"

"We'll call it off this time because we're helping each other out."

"You gave me much more last time——" I began, trying not to seem greedy.

"If you don't want to work you can do the other thing," said Uncle Bertie, and he gave me a kiss.

I went north and did weekly rep. for three months. I played Juliet, Portia, Norah, Candida, The Second Mrs.

Tanqueray, and a whole lot more. I sent Uncle Bertie a pound at the end of the first week, and then he wrote and said he would send me four pounds every week and keep the fifth back as it would save me postage.

My Mum stayed three months in the nursing home. She said it was every bit as good as Uncle Bertie had described, and they were so careful that they wouldn't let her out until I was back to look after her.

I went up to thank Uncle Bertie and see if there was another job going. He said thanks were out of place between friends and he had chalked up Mum's nursing home fees against me, but I could work it off right away as he had another job for me as " hostess " in a night club that he had just started.

I lost my sense of humour about Uncle Bertie that time. It had something to do with his owning the nursing home where Mum went, and the odd shillings in the four guineas a week. . . . Somehow or other I couldn't help thinking Uncle Bertie should have paid me in guineas too—and there was a lot more to it that made my head swim when I tried to figure it out. As usual, I took these troubles up to Uncle Bertie, but he said it was no good artists trying to worry their heads about business because it was a scientific, and not an artistic, problem. He said it all came naturally to him but that he had learnt a great deal about how business is run from a book by a man called Karl Marx. He added that it wasn't a book that would help me out of my troubles though, and no artist should ever try to read it as it would only muddle them up and make them inartistic.

" You leave the brain-stuff to your uncle," he said, " and he'll see the family wins through."

But that was all a long, long time ago. . . .

There was no doubt though that the family was suffering from growing pains in those days. We used to talk over our troubles amongst ourselves sometimes, instead of taking them up to Uncle Bertie for smoothing. We thought it might be a good idea if we joined a trade union. The electricians and the

carpenters and prop. men belonged to unions. We asked an electrician called Wally if he thought it would help us with our troubles and if Uncle Bertie would mind.

" That's right, you go ahead and organise yourselves," he said, " You don't want to worry what the old twister thinks."

We went ahead and organised ourselves pretty thoroughly and Uncle Bertie minded terribly, when he found out. I don't remember ever seeing him so upset. He talked about " Divided Loyalty," and " Stab in the Back." He even threatened to go out of business in order to bring us to our senses. But in the end his natural jolliness reasserted itself and he went and joined a union, too. Sometimes members of our union used to sit around a table with members of his, smoothing out troubles. Uncle Bertie sat at the head of the table, and it was " all one happy family " again.

But I must get back to the last time I saw Uncle Bertie; the time I mentioned at the beginning of this story. The war that started in September, 1939, had been bombing along for sixteen months and the family was in a terrible state. The London theatres had been closing and opening and closing again and some of Uncle Bertie's (the condemned ones that were going to be pulled down anyway, because Uncle Bertie didn't think it worth while to repair them) had fallen down, due to enemy action. The family was scattered all over the place, many had been called up and the unions were getting all hot and bothered about funeral benefit. There were a few plays going out to the provinces, but they were mostly old plays, with oldish nephews and nieces and a few film stars who would much rather have been making anti-fascist films. Curiously enough, Uncle Bertie seemed to have become utterly defeatist. He was sending out no plays to his provincial theatres—he was just letting them. No theatrical ventures, side-lines or innovations, once so dear to his heart (and now so necessary to the people), were trumpeted and drummed into being by his flamboyant advertising. The first bomb seemed to have got poor old Uncle Bertie right on the knocker. It was

almost impossible to get even a glimpse of him. I went up half-a-dozen times but the gigantic office chair had nothing in it. I saw him once, in the distance, being pushed into his car by two commissionaires. They looked like removal men struggling with a wardrobe. But I was too far away to see if he looked sad or broken by the collapse of his cherished theatre and family.

Well, just the other day, I went up again and there he was, firm in his chair with a cigar a foot long sticking out of his jolly old face. He didn't look a bit depressed, and when I said it was a pity he wasn't finding any new plays or sending out any companies to the reception areas he shook his head emphatically.

"We must all make sacrifices now, ducky. We've got to go where we are most wanted."

"But that's just my point," I said. "The people do want us and we are doing nothing about it."

"Ah, you don't want to mix yourself up in politics."

"It has nothing to do with politics——"

"Now don't interrupt your uncle," he said. "Doing the job you want to do is politics. Doing it where you want to do it is politics, and doing it how you want to do it is the worst kind of politics. It's all right to talk these things over with your uncle, but don't you go round speaking out of turn."

"But what about acting to the people in shelters?"

"There's no money in it," said Uncle Bert. "Besides, you don't want people crowding into those things. Why, they fall down even when the bombs don't hit 'em," and he laughed until the chair creaked.

"They might build better shelters if we filled them every night with jolly people who don't want to be buried at home to the tunes on the wireless. People can't——"

"Now ducky, there you go again—all politics. The best thing for your trouble is to go and join one of those women's army thingumbobs. You'll get plenty of hard work, and theatricals in time off just to keep your hand in."

"What about my Mum? Who is going to keep her?"

"Oh, you don't want to worry like that at a time of national emergency. We've all got to make sacrifices."

"It must be pretty hard for you," I said, "after all these years and with all your responsibilities."

"I'm back where I started," said Uncle Bertie, gazing thoughtfully out of the window.

Across the street lay the remains of one of his oldest theatres —the one where I had played my first three parts and four understudies, fifteen years ago. The snow was lying on the charred beams and blocks of masonry. The red carpet of the dress-circle staircase hung down, stirring in the north-east wind like a dirty banner.

"Where you started?" I asked quietly.

"I lost interest in my job around about 1918," said Uncle Bertie, puffing at his cigar. "That's when I took up with the theatre. But now I'm back where I started," he pointed across the street, "making those things."

"What things?"

"Bombs," said Uncle Bertie. "The nation's all one happy family now and the honour of the family comes first."

THE SOLDIER

DENYS VAL BAKER

THE soldier marched his first gleam-shafted bayonet down the familiar street and out to the dust-worn plains, away from the sweet tears of the gutters.

The pebble that once stirred the hopeful womb was imprinted into an astronomical number. The babied eyes were rounded into cold steel bullets, the first toothless laugh was the grim white line of a desert-face, the fresh fair skin was feckled a bitter brown by the killer's sun. Through the dust marched the tricycle child and the satchelled hero-worshipper, the street-corner idler and the family joker, the time-born event-fated wearer of the sullen brown greatcoat and the leather sweat-boot; the last man in the fourth row of the swinging battalion. He was two paces from the stained puttees of the front line and two paces from the dust-gathering boots of the rear line, two paces from the disinterested freedom of the low brambled hedges.

The afternoon air rang with the clipped clop of old boots and new boots, the steady tom-tom of dancing war bloods. Now in the open plains the endless line had an ending and a beginning. Now in the wide wandering bareness the beginning was a bright brown drummer and an isolated piper. Now in the forlorn far horizon the end was a thoughtful old sergeant and a tired mule. Now in the isolated aridness the middle was a fat-bellied snake of three hundred, three-lined mocking bayonets.

Now in the endless war march the soldier looked at the grunting convoy of petrol devils and remembered the King Harry chargers and the Arab horses that pawed the ground in olden years. He eyed the emotionless wireless turrets of the oven-raised cars and remembered the joyful colours of a hundred waving flags and the old dreams of a dash to glory.

He stared thoughtfully at the wicked long field gun with the shining snout and remembered the broken lances of a thousand quixotic knight-riders. He saw the malicious tommy-gun and the were-wolfed grenade carrier and the lank gas container and the splitting green metals; the darkened, heavy air shone with his vague memories of a clean white sword and the chivalrous shield, and he glanced more warmly at the single fresh shortness of his clean-bladed bayonet.

The way lay across the plain of the unprotective dust, but the soldier walked along in the sheltering dream of a far-away mind. The soldier's brown boots crunched over ragged pathways, but his mind floated on a straight smoothly through a cloudless sky.

When I was a small boy we used to play soldiers around an old sand heap he remembered surprisedly. There were eight of us and we used to take sides and be generals and field-marshals and colonels and captains, we were never just soldiers he remembered wistfully. Some of us used to stand on top of the sand heap and defend it to the death and some of us used to stand back and then charge up the sand heap like the cavalry he remembered quite clearly. We used to fight with wooden swords and paper pellets and water pistols in those days he remembered happily. (I remember the day when I threw a flour bomb from behind a tree and hit the ginger-haired boy on his head).

We got tired of it in the end, it began to seem rather silly like all our games, and then we used to walk about the village and go to the pictures and do homework, he remembered thoughtfully. Now I am a real soldier marching off to a real war thought the soldier, unreally, an odd cold compartment opening in some far-off corner of his antique head.

Away on the destined horizon blew the curling smoke from a hundred hidden flames; the spat metal hissed and rained on some lonely land; the long-rumbled rolls tumbled through the haze. Listening, the soldier lost the safety of an artificial memory. His eyes riveted into their steely sockets and

glared down the long road and watched, relieved, the friendly waves of the returning juggerwheels with their masturbating guntips. He marched on, marching his fifth mile and his fortieth furlong and his eight thousandth and eight hundredth yard and his twenty-six thousandth and four hundredth foot. Then he began to notice the whining whippet cars, with their wounded dents and their scarred sides and the white looks in their eyes.

The soldier looked away and hummed a pointless refrain, the three-hundred and thirty soldiers hummed their pointless refrains; their voices suddenly swelled into the air and drowned the distant night-music. "There's a sweet, sweet girl in my old home town," sang the marching soldiers. "And she's waiting there for me," sang the shouldered-arm soldiers. . . . "Waiting there for me," echoed the solitary soldier in his guttural helmet. His eyes peered caressingly about the innumerable backs and felt the unexpected warm friendship of them. The soldier sang louder and wilder, at the top of his voice, and was in tune with their tune and in step with their steps, and they sheltered one another's wondering minds with their warm humanity.

Then the skies opened and the first bumble bees screamed into the lives and deaths of the back-street boys. The soldier paralysed in his dust tracks, hearing the death-whistle past his neck, seeing a stout man scream and writhe in his steps. The soldier choked in his fear gasps, watching the snake wriggle and burst open, the river of blood drowning the familiar dust. The soldier trembled on the perched ground and felt five earthquakes shake the world.

Ten lifetimes fled in a last minute: *now I am a real soldier* thought the soldier in his hoped-for escape; the bumble bees flew away on a happy trail, blaring their triumph.

The soldier stood up and breathed the fresh, free air, among the groaning gargoyles. The prayed-for only son stood unhurt among the blue bleedings, watching the slow life trickling out of the side-mouth of a twitching corpse. The

farewelled hero screamed inside his stomach discovering the open entrails of an old campaigner and the dead smile of a girl's sweetheart. The brass-stamped digit winced a personal horror and an individual terror following the bullet into the spewn-out eye of a fair-haired boy. Somewhere a severed arm lay pointing along the dusty road.

March! March! March! wheedled a frightened black horseman. March! March! March! pleaded a nervous living subaltern. March you devils, march! yelled a petrified sergeant. March, march, march, march, march, march, mumbled the dull-eyed men, the dull-eyed two hundred living bayonets.

March! cried the soldier to his own small heart, and he squared his dropped shoulders and stepped into the straggled column. He marched steadily along the winding road of the side-strewn lorries, away from the unbelievable afternoon and the labouring medicals. He gazed straight ahead of him, under his weary thick helmet, and saw only the thinned blur of the swaying necks, the strange lop ears and the red, red bandages.

Five miles to the front whispered the rumour wind. Four miles to the front whispered the rumour wind. Three miles to the front whispered the rumour wind. There is no front said a grave-eyed man at an office desk, plotting his far-away maps.

Two miles to the front whispered the fearful rumour wind. A sudden bomb burst in the lowering clouds, scattering the wild steel lumps on to tinkling helmets, and a man and a man and a man reeled into deadness. There is no front said a stout jovial man at an evening conference, in the padded club armchair.

One mile to the front whispered the terrified rumour wind. The whistle of five shells screamed low in the air and frenzied the black horse into a fit. There is no front, said the waistcoat-thumbing politician on his happy rostrum, in the musty hall.

Halt! yelled the stumbling officer, through his bloody lips, and they stood silently on the edge of downward fields, in the

amazing dusk. There is no front, said the discerning military critic in the big city press room.

Dig! yelled the faltering officer with the heavy eyelids, and two hundred and twenty new boys began to create the cold outpost trench with its oozing water. Dig! Dig! Dig! yelled the hoarse-husked officer and the sensitive subaltern and the swearing sergeant. There is no front, there is no front, there is no front chanted honey-sweet voices in the pleasure parks and the forest-ringed cities.

Dig, dig, dig, dig, dig! echoed the resounding mind of the soldier, the time-worn soldier from the lost village and the sweet kisses, standing in the four-foot trench with the squirming reptiles. Dig! he thought in his sweated half-nakedness, until the mounded earth was a cloak to half the sky, and he stood in a corner of the uprooted soil, blinding his streaked eyes to the mad night's flashes, drumming his ears into the ground at the near whistles of the death spears.

A big flame seared the sky like an old wound. Mother of God! screamed the soldier. A wild howl rent the air. Oh, Holy Mary! prayed the frozen-bowelled soldier. A mad wind blew away the air and cleft open the six hours' digging into a pulped vegetable plant. Lord in Heaven! whispered the soldier, lying in an isolated compatch, the squelching mud thrown around him and the moaning music a dirge of the night.

God give me strength! muttered the ordinary soldier with the back-garden memory, plunging into the red welter with his humane help. God give me strength! repeated the heavy-breathed soldier with the raw visioned eyes, through the long night of blood. God give me strength! said the old-eyed soldier with the fogged mind, in the cold sweated dawn. . . . Out of the vast crater, out of the smoking wound, crawled the dull red men, the last hundred and ten bayonet carriers with the tattered tunics and the wild, wild eyes.

Now I am a real soldier thought the empty-headed soldier in the frightened morning sun. He giggled. Now I am a real soldier thought the raw-bellied soldier in the open-air breakfast

field. He laughed tears. (Now I am a real soldier and my folks will be proud of me and my girl will love me and the village flags will wave in my honour and I will be quite a hero when I go on leave, thought the day-old soldier, in the heat of the hell-field.)

The bayonets gleamed in the sun as they lay themselves grimly in the startled grass. The soldier lay silent and thoughtful, sweat and soil interlining his face. The soldier crouched in the long stalks with a grim rifle pointing to the enemy forests. The soldier murmured a text-book phrase and desperately remembered the loud brass bands. The soldier fingered the cold steel skin of his rifle and felt the blood washing cold in his expectant veins. Forward! uttered the tired officer with the eyes of no hope and the blank mind of the past or future.

They crawled slowly through the long grass in the steady rhythmic sound of the jungle-beaters. They crept down the long field, down the gladed valley to the menacing woods that lay in the hollows. Their stomachs rolled over tiny stones and crumpled soils, crushing the young stalks. Their eyes stared into the firm brown ground and wept wearily. They crawled along a hedge and across a lane and warily scattered towards the long green approach of the doom wood.

The soldier thought of his last leave in the merry village, the laughter of the wine. He saw himself in the proud mirror, he thought of the swanking dance and the seductive moonlit walk. His mind's eye paced down the main street and round the chemist's corner and up the laburnum grove to the red-tiled house with the friendly winking moonlight, the brown-berried girl in the endless loft.

The soldier crawled in a no-man's-field and remembered a soft skin and a gentle-curved breast; but a cold, stuttered machine-gun jaggedly poured molten metal into yearning bodies, in the senseless sunshine.

The soldier crouched in the field of peaceful harvest corn and remembered a last night's sleep in the cool bedclothes;

but a savage iron hand sprayed rains of death over the screaming boys, like a farmer's happy mowing machine.

(I am alive alive, alive, alive, alive thought the flat-faced soldier in the indigo hay. Alive, alive, alive, alive, thought the charmed minds of ten bright guardsmen, leaning over their immortal precipices and swaying in the wind.)

Forward! cried the incredible officer, leaping into the animal open and hurling his madness into the sadistic wood-face. Forward! cried the mesmerised ghosts of the fields, with the disappearing bowels and the frozen hearts and the bloodless veins and the buried emotions and the blind eyes and the mechanical minds, springing giant-like into the huge sky horizon and flinging their careless limbs through the hailing bulletstorm and the flooding red metal and the vicious stutter, up to the belching mouth of the quaking wood's nest.

The soldier staggered into the death circle. He had a bullet-torn arm and a bleeding dragged leg, the dull-blown shoulder and the sweat-dripped eyes, but he could hold high a rifle with a flaming blade, and he stumbled suddenly over a tree-side and on to the tinny heart of the shrieking deaths-head.

War! blared the thick headlines of the comfortable newspapers.

War! exclaimed the luxury monarch on his velvet cushions.

War! declared the brass-peaked commander in the exciting headquarters.

War! exclaimed the laconic gunner with the string trigger to a mile-a-second whistle.

War! grinned the beret-capped driver of a melting molten tank, with the armour plates

War! War! War! screamed the soldier in the exultant frenzy of his nine-inch steel power, throwing his frailty down and down and down and plunging his wild point straight into the fat tunic of a crouched monster, twisting it far into the soft, surprised bowels.

War! screamed the ten death-masks, and they smothered the crunched bees in their molten nest and stamped the blood

and the flesh into the pulp of their broken bones until the gun stuttered into an ungainly silence.

Hours and hours and days and days and weeks and weeks and months and months and years and years and centuries and centuries later he stood laughing against a tree. The world lay upside down before him, in a tortured cesspool, and the other soldiers were gone into the mists of madness. He was alone in a tall-treed mortuary.

Comrade! hailed the soldier.

Comrade! hailed the sudden lonely soldier.

Comrade! cried the soldier, in the quiet forest with the morning hiss of death in the dewy tree roots.

Comrade! whispered the ground and the soldier leapt to the side of a torn red tunic and the begging eyes of a morning machine-gunner. (Comrade, comrade, comrade! thought the hate-ebbed soldier as he stemmed the thick life stream and pitied the slim boy from the unseen horizon.)

The soldier hooked the baby arms around his neck, took the sadwitted body on his curved shoulders, straightened up with the deadweight devil of another world on his clinging back and the soft sweet whisper of twisted humanity in his ear. He slowly dragged himself across the shattered wood and out into the false sunshine and down the long field again. He whispered consoling whispers to the dying head on a lolling shoulder, and bathed the bright eyes of himself in a mirror, and smiled the faint tremulous smile of the little boy in some playtime cherry orchard.

Now I am a real soldier thought the soldier in the empty-hearted land, sobbing under the glory-gored sky.

He staggered on across the fields and the woods and the lanes and there was no grass and no leaves and no human breath in the long swirling dust, only the vast loneliness of the heart only the old, sad eyes of the soldier. His memories in a dead field and his enemy on his back and his toy rifle dragging on the dry gloomy stones.

I HOLD YOUR FACE

I HOLD your face in my hands like a precious bubble
With my wrists close together under your chin
And the tips of my fingers on the tips of your eyes
And your face comes off in my delicate grasp.

I carry this precious bubble in the box of my hands
Like the metal moon couched in its wet tissue paper
And bring it away with me, not sent in advance,
So that here I may unpack it to remain with me.

How to protect this precious bubble when my guarding hands
Are busy twittering among the tea-cups and cigarette talk
Troubles the centres of my palms and worries
The bend of my wrists under your chin.

But because I have held in my hands this precious bubble
So that between my hands still lingers a round memory
The pain and rough touch of this further wandering
Can do no harm, cannot break this steel-bound framework.

STEPHEN COATES.

LINES WRITTEN IN AN AIR-RAID

Look, friend, how the hostile day
Raffles reality about our love.
Say to me all you never meant to say,
For I know, now, all you were ever thinking of.
Look in my eyes, and not the other way
To the sky, where the clouds are set as gigantic chess
And the planes between, as a player's fingers, move.
Kiss me, before all breaks. Let me touch your dress.
If we must die, then let it be of love,
And set the whole world trembling as we kiss.

FRANCIS SCARFE.

SONNET

You cannot paint this dead discoloured bone
As you could paint your lips in former days,
Nor can the glass you stare at quite alone
Console you for the lack of human praise;
For now your beauty fades before your eyes
And earth obscures your mirror like a cloud,
And heaven will not take the virgin prize
So carefully preserved to grace a shroud.

Now is it time for our two loves to meet
And consummate desire in brittle bliss;
We have attendants, have a winding sheet
In which to dance and compliment and kiss,
And we shall find our passion most complete,
If missing lips can make a synthesis.

JOHN BAYLISS.

SLEEP

From the slow solemn ticking on the stair,
from cheek fast in pillow and chin
in eiderdown, from limbs yet sensate,
to the breathing of a new nerveless air.
My heart is not mine now, nor yours,
for Life holds it close in his hand;
he is the pilot of my nightly ship,
and Love the moving sea between the shores.
But O the anguish and the death when
the day raider comes and at a bound
destroys our quiet harbour! Ear listens
to what fingers feel—the cruelty and burning,
the noisy stolen tide, and eye
sees anchor broken and the dear sea dry.

IAN L. SERRAILLIER.

DEATHS AND ENTRANCES

On almost the incendiary eve
Of several near deaths,
When one at the least of your best loved
And always known must leave
Lions and fires of his flying breath,
Of your immortal friends
Who'd raise the organs of the counted dust
To shoot and sing your praise,
One who called deepest down shall hold his peace
That cannot sink or cease
Endlessly to his wound
In many married London's estranging grief.

On almost the incendiary eve
When at your lips and keys,
Locking, unlocking, the murdered strangers weave,
One who is most unknown,
Your polestar neighbour, sun of another street,
Will dive up to his tears.
He'll bathe his raining blood in the male sea
Who strode for your own dead
And wind his globe out of your water thread
And load the throats of shells
With every cry since light
Flashed first across his thunderclapping eyes.

On almost the incendiary eve
Of deaths and entrances,
When near and strange wounded on London's waves
Have sought your single grave,
One enemy, of many, who knows well
Your heart is luminous
In the watched dark, quivering through locks and caves,
Will pull the thunderbolts

To shut the sun, plunge, mount your darkened keys
 And sear just riders back,
 Until that one loved least
Looms the last Samson of your zodiac.

DYLAN THOMAS.

PRIVATE POEM

How Frieda died and how the rain
Fell secretly in Oxford Street;
How Victor smiled against the pain,
How Helen lay upon the sheet.

How Dorothea wept, how quite
Impeccably at Havre the sun
Climbed the old wall and how the night
Came down the hills at Corrollton.

How Hector walked his eyes, his hair,
His jovial voice beyond the blind,
His urgent hands, how Julien's rare
Hot laughter rattled in the mind.

How Brussels lay beneath the snow,
How Paris sang and in the Rue
Monsieur-le-Prince, how quiet the slow
And trivial drenching of the dew.

These I remember in the dark,
Voices, a touch of hands, a cry,
The Sunday concert in the park,
And how we live and how we die.

LAWRENCE OLSON.

THE MOTHER AND CHILD

Let hands be about him white, O his mother's first,
Who caught him, fallen from light through nine months' haste
Of darkness, hid in the worshipping womb, the chaste
Thought of the creature with its certain thirst.
Looking up to her eyes declined that make her fair
He kicks and strikes for joy, reaching for those dumb springs.
He climbs her, sinks, and his mouth under darkness clings
To the night-surrounded milk in the fire of her hair.
She drops her arm, and, feeling the fruit of his lips,
Tends him cunningly. O what secrets are set
In the tomb of each breath, where a world of light in eclipse
Of a darkly worshipping world exults in the joy she gave,
Knowing that miracle, miracle to beget,
Springs like a star to her milk, is not for the grave.

VERNON WATKINS.

AMOR FATI

Beloved enemy, preparer of my death,
When there's no longer any garment left
To lessen the clenched impact of our limbs,
When there is mutual drought in our swift breath
And twin tongues struggle for the brim
Of swollen flood—an aching undertow
Sucking us inward—when our blood's
Lust has attained its whitest glow
And the convulsion comes in quickening gusts,
Speaking is fatal: Do not break
That vacuum out of which our silence speaks
Of its sad speechless fury to the star
Whose glitter scars
The heavy heaven under which we lie
And injure one another O incurably!

DAVID GASCOYNE.

THE GLANCE

Strange eyes for a baby
And disconcerting. They ought not yet to express
Any perplexity, we think; still less
A flash of fear in trust.
Hard to bear such a tremulous look. Did
You just detect that a parent is not a god?

Any glance could tell
The whole truth, for here the body still
Speaks for the soul and has no separate will.
Kindled in joy, cursive in form like those
Baroque babies that float in Venetian skies,
You express a plain fact in an elaborate pose.

Wildness of gesture, the round
Calm shape of a cloud, precision of a kitten, are found
In one fat baby, with much that can never be learned
From any painted boy;
The riches in a chuckle, the rays of joy,
The changing moons of light in a living eye.

Yet much is already hidden;
Secret stir of the brain, secret ways
To turn my will, and test my strength of purpose.
And then, what possible relation
Exists between the darling of one moment
And the crimson barbarous brat of another instant?

Relation is seen in the whole.
The rage that from the first corrodes the soul
Even for a tiny child is pain to feel.
Aware but unreflective,
It dreads in me the force of its future anger,
Trusts in love, and will know it to be the stronger.

ANNE RIDLER.

THE CONSTANT NORTH

Encompass me, my lover,
With your eyes' wide calm.
Though noonday shadows are assembling doom,
The sun remains when I remember them;
And death, if it should come,
Must fall like quiet snow from such clear skies.

Minutes we snatched from the unkind winds
Are grown into daffodils by the sea's
Edge, mocking its green miseries;
Yet I seek you hourly still, over
A new Atlantis loneliness, blind
As a restless needle held by the constant north
we always have in mind.

J. F. HENDRY.

MY FOREHEAD UNSIGNED

My forehead unsigned with the Cross of the Passion
I passed Wednesday morning on the road to Breffay
and wild raged my mind 'gainst the God of their fashion
and I spat out my curses on what they would say.

I broke off the buttons and reefed off my fine coat
and bit off my shirt with the teeth of my rage.
I pulled at the mad wind, clutched at his black throat
and fell in the blind ditch that fouled me with clay.

Then skirting the dread hours I made for the wakehouse;
but dead were the sly looks that thwarted me there,
till I saw a young girl and opened their sour mouths
with coaxing her fixed eyes from out of that place.

But my dead love has me and I reeled from the soft lips
that would wrinkle the memory of Maura Mulraine.
And the young one went from me and cried in the darkness
that I'd laid her a fresh flower on my love's lonely grave.

PATRICK MADDEN.

THE CREATIVE ARTS IN OUR TIME

STEPHEN SPENDER

At the beginning of the last war, Rupert Brooke and others were "trumpets singing to battle." Why did not Rupert Brooke step forward, "young and golden-haired" this time? No doubt, in part, precisely because one had done so last time. There is another reason: the poetry of the war of democracy versus fascism had already been written by English, French Spanish, German and Italian émigré poets during the past five years, and particularly during the Spanish war.

Both these reasons draw attention to the difference between poetry and propaganda. Poetry has a long memory, propaganda has a short one. The official propagandists of the war are not "put off," like the poets, by memories of the last one. On the contrary, they tend to revive all the old stuff. Democracy fights to the accompaniment of a curious mixture of the revivals of the musical hits, marching songs, hun-hatred, of 1914-18, combined with left-wing, anti-fascist, humanitarian propaganda of the supporters of the Republicans during the Spanish War. A poet who represented the spirit of official England to-day would write verse that was a synthesis of Rupert Brooke's 1914 Sonnets and the Anthology Poems for Spain.

The public memory may be short, the B.B.C. may douche us with revivals of the melodies of the Great War, a resurrected spy-mania may infest remote villages, the editorials of the conservative press may annex the opinions of the editorials of the left wing press during recent years—but all this is embarrassing to anyone who feels that there should be some kind of consistency in the presentation of facts, the development of arguments, before the public, if any sense of values is to be maintained. I even doubt whether the public memory is as short as our leaders and leader-writers assume. I think

there must be many relatives of the dead in the last war whose minds are filled with poignant nausea by the heartless resurrection of the inane ideas and melodies to which the young of a previous generation marched into the enormous French sepulchres now conquered by the Germans.

Here the poet—by which I mean the creative literary artist—steps in with the warning of his silence and his refusal to say what is expected of him. This has less to do with the ethics of the war itself than with the ethics of the way in which it is being presented to us in a stream of words flowing from pulpits, and " on the air " and in the newspapers. Whether the war itself is just and necessary is one question, which does not concern me here : a different question is whether the reasons offered by the people who are conducting it are the right ones. It might happen that a war which was justified according to standards which most people in a democracy would accept, was being presented to the public in an ambiguous way.

There might be various reasons for such an ambiguity; for example, a genuine ambiguity in the government itself about its war aims; a refusal to accept the revolutionary implications of the war; a preference for the idea and catchwords of the past, in the fear that the really effective propaganda might put " wrong " ideas into people's heads; an unwillingness to commit the whole public to a realization of the final plunge, even after it has been taken; lack of contact between the understanding of the governing class and the common people; the usual muddle, incompetence and lack of imagination. All these explanations, if, as I suspect, they are true, have serious political implications. But here I am concerned with equally serious implications in our cultural life; that the constant misuse of words and prostitution of ideas may lead to a generally spreading cynicism about the meaning not only of what we are fighting for, but of any war aims which may be proposed by any political party whatever in future.

Here we are brought face to face with the greatest dilemma of poets living to-day. We are living in a political age. That

is to say, political beliefs and events play a part in the lives of contemporaries which religious and spectacular warnings of the working out of doom amongst the great used to play in the past. Problems of social organization are so crucially important that any religious mind which ignores them, instead of providing an example to the world, like the teaching of Christ, has shrunk into a shelter from the world. The destruction which one nation can inflict on another has dwarfed even terrible natural events and examples of happiness or unhappiness in private life made public.

For the poets to ignore this tendency of every smaller issue to be swept up in the ever-widening stream of the vast issues that threaten to engulf the whole world, would be to abandon the main tradition of a culture which has always been at the centre of the life of the time. However limited its audience may have been, or, rather, however indirectly its lessons may have seeped through the select audience of the genuinely initiated to the vast surrounding life outside, poetry has been a clearing house of the deepest emotional life of people in the past. There has been no act of abdication by which the poets have decided to abandon their interpretations of these passionate forces, for the transplanted alpine flower of a rock garden. There have certainly always been gardens of retreat for poetry, but these have implied the existence of a greater life of literature outside.

Poets are faced then with the problem of transforming into the comprehensible terms of the imagination the chaos of this politically obsessed world. We live in the midst of conflicting issues, such as the life and death struggles between nations and classes, the struggle of a new order to come into existence. Moreover, we are constantly being disturbed by shattering material events, such as wars and revolutions. The problem is to understand the nature of these events and transform them into a lucid language of the imagination, where they exist in their own right, coherent visions independent of reality, but nevertheless reflecting the truth of reality.

Whenever poetry deals with social issue it is bound to push a view of life to its extreme limits. Without this there could be no clarification of the complex surface of actuality. The extremist is single-minded, penetrating, looks into the deep causes of events, is not taken in by appearances. The most unpoetical figures of our own political age are the vague and woolly muddlers, the respectable, the people who think that everything will come out all right in the end, however murky its origins, the people who deny in their own conduct the existence of any deep instincts and needs and passions. These are the Baldwins, the Chamberlains, the leaders of established religions, who regard themselves as representatives of Common Sense in a world which has nothing much wrong with it, if only their wildly fanatical opponents would realize how comfortable we all might be. Compared with these bourgeois leaders, gangsters, hard-headed business crooks, Mussolini and Hitler, are poetical villains. With few exceptions, the incisive, penetrating, daring, imaginative, and therefore poetic minds of our time are materialist, for better or worse, because the outstanding problems are material ones. This does not mean that all spiritual minds are idealist and utopian in the feeblest sense. It does mean that the spiritually minded cannot afford to neglect material problems. The gangsters, crooks and exploiters at least grasp at the tangible rewards of their murders and villainy. They are genuinely corrupt. They are not a soft fur on the surface of the corruption of the whole past and present, living a life which is nothing but an appearance.

No doubt the appeal of fascism to the disillusioned youth of the war-torn world consists largely in this. It is a revolt of those who, having looked around them and seen how society is founded on wars and oppression, are determined at least to enjoy the fruits of violence, and even the experience of violence itself. *Mein Kampf* has an affinity with some of the poetic visions of the nineteenth century. It is the reverse of a medal on one side of which are the railings of Carlyle, Ruskin's nightmare of a "war cloud," even *Une Saison en Enfer*, and

Les Fleurs du Mal. Hitler tells how horrified he was at the methods used by the Social Democrats in driving out their political opponents ; and how he immediately decided to adopt these methods himself. Many passages like this, and similar passages in much other fascist literature, are as much the mental machinery of a deliberately chosen life of damnation, as the macabre diabolism of Baudelaire.

However much some critics may regret the fact, poetry and the other creative arts are not exclusively politically constructive and progressive. Where the established order is particularly stuffy and devitalized, it is attacked by an upboiling of primitive vitality in several directions—the condottieri fascists, the fanatically hating communists, and the insistence on an instinctive life and the sub-conscious, of the psychologists. Wherever there is some real consciousness of the value of life as distinct from money and the social façade, there is room for poetry. Thus you get a reactionary poetry of the destructive political forces, with a tremendous insistence on the glamour of the past, in Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, Roy Campbell, and much of the later Yeats. The poems of Auden, the books of Jung, Heard, de Rougemont, etc., are attempts to create a mythology of modern man in search of his soul, before an audience which cannot accept allegory unless it is written in pseudo-scientific jargon and deals in pseudo-scientific hypothesis.

The most far-reaching and comprehensive analysis of politics of this age, one which, while it sees the necessity of politics at present, sees also beyond the political era, is contained in the Communist Manifesto. Communism, as much as the cynical gangster-politicians, looks below the surface of middle-class civilization, to the poverty of the workers and the oppression of enslaved races on which it is built. It insists that there is a struggle, it insists that there are contradictions in the system itself which are bound to lead to war. It is free of the absurdly childish irresponsible racketeering elements of the romantic fascists, because at the forefront of the whole philosophy it puts one single revolutionary act of justice, the

appropriation and use of the means of production in the interests of all.

It is remarkable that communism has not produced a poem which contains a picture of the age as vivid as "Piers Plowman." All the elements of such a picture are contained in such a fragment as the chapter called "The Working Day" in Marx's *Capital.* The real reason why there is no communist literature to match the impressive documentation of existing conditions and the powerful communist theory is because the whole movement is inextricably bound up with the problem of political power. This means that the picture from day to day is constantly altering to suit the "party line." Impressive as the communist case is, there is no single picture of the world in the minds of communists which might crystallize into a great work of art. On the contrary, communists are at pains to drive out those who show too great a single-mindedness, because an abstract conception of communism might detach itself from the practical problem of adopting any means to seize power.

Every significant movement in English poetry could be interpreted as a reaction to the central facts of the political situation. The "Georgians" were discredited because they were dupes who pretended that no such situation exists. As soon as the last war broke out, they showed their lack of acumen, by naïvely gilding the patriotic propaganda of the politicians. However, some of them protested. Wilfred Owen is the outstanding example of a writer who insisted on telling the truth about what he actually saw and felt in the war, without looking very far beyond his nose. He did not indulge in either the heroics of Rupert Brooke or the indignation of Sassoon. After this, *The Waste Land* is a despairing destructive analysis of the collapse of a whole civilization. Yet God stretches out a hand into the flames, with an offer of personal salvation. ("O Lord, thou pluck'st me Burning.") Since then Eliot has explored still further the possibility of personal salvation, in *Ash Wednesday.* His more recent work shows a desire to achieve a synthesis between this and a great

social change to be effected by a Christian society which is conscious of its social obligations. Here it is worth noting that an interest in one's personal salvation is no more "irresponsible" than is political zeal on behalf of everybody. For to trouble about one's own salvation may be to show a sense of the limits of one's responsibility towards oneself and the universe, whereas to save others without saving oneself may simply show a desire to escape from personal responsibility.

I have already mentioned the reactionary political writers such as Pound, Campbell and Yeats, and the communistically-inclined writers of the *New Signatures* group. There remains the attitude expressed by Laura Riding and Robert Graves, protesting that political writing is too limited in subject matter, because political struggles answer so very small a proportion of questions about life and time and space, and because people who turn to politics neglect their own psychological problems, or pretend that they have none.

If one considers all these writers as grouped around the existing human situation of men and women who are alive now, one begins to see that each is faced with the same problems. Wilfrid Owen says that talk about high causes has gone far enough, one must tell the truth about the intolerable suffering which one sees around one. Others may be able to discern the heroism of the struggle later. Hence his war poems. The lesson is underlined in a poem not about the war, called *Miners*. The message of Eliot's early poetry is even more despairing, because besides admitting to the immediate infinite suffering, he generalizes from it to a picture of a collapsing civilization. Owen had admitted that there might be heroes, and therefore a heroic cause, though he himself was too close to events to see this. Communism accepts the picture of collapse but sees in it a sign of hope. It outlines a revolutionary programme for the building of a new form of society. It thus both accepts despair and insists nevertheless that there is a future. At the same time it neglects metaphysical problems, and it attaches so great an importance to the day-to-day

struggle that the sense of time beyond men's lives, and space stretching into infinite distances beyond humanity, is lost. All is concentrated on the provincial and momentary in this little corner of the universe. Just as some diseases cure other diseases, it recommends an obsessive phase of preoccupation with man's own fate as a cure for civilization. It neglects every kind of truth outside this phase of the inter-human struggle, especially the truth that nothing matters in the light of death or eternity. In the interests of the victory of the proletariat, it accepts every distortion of the means to serve the ends. It is uncritical of its own methods, and, apart from their usefulness to "the party," makes men unself-critical.

What points does one find common to all these attitudes, which might indicate a future programme for poetry?

In the first place, there is the insistence on truth. By this I do not mean to deny the ultimate truth of certain political aims, but that the creative artist must insist on the right to portray the truth as he sees it, without consciously relating it to any system of thought. If he sees suffering, he must portray suffering, as Owen did. Suffering is a part of the whole truth, and if it is heroic because it subserves a heroic and revolutionary end, there will be others who realize this also. Indeed, it is of the nature of poetic truth to establish a sense of proportion in everything, so that the reader unconsciously relates the statement of the poem to the whole situation and mood of the writer. A poem is a fragment of experience, but if it is a good poem it implies a complementary totality of experience outside itself. Thus the first responsibility of the artist—so different from that of the political agitator—is to describe the truth as he sees it. He is primarily a witness, and his audience, his judges, can draw their own conclusions. He is not himself an arbiter, a dictator, a philosopher, or a scientist, trying to say the last words about human behaviour or the nature of the universe.

This humble attitude towards truth, insisting on truth as the poet sees it, but nevertheless implying the existence of a

wider reality beyond the single poetic experience, is the keynote to the modern movement in poetry. The Georgian week-end rural poetry is unsatisfactory not because it is limited, but in so far as it has pretensions, in common with Lord Baldwin and his like, to imply that as long as there are buttercups in the fields all is right with the world. The poems of Rilke, Eliot, Auden, Herbert Read, Laura Riding, George Barker, Dylan Thomas, all have this in common: a truthful attitude towards the poet's own experience and a search for an analytic attitude with far-reaching implications towards the present crisis in civilization.

These poets borrow from Christianity, from a re-examination of the European tradition, from Communism, from psycho-analysis, from anarchism: all in an effort to examine as deeply as possible the fissures in society and the minds of individuals. But a simple destructive attitude of acceptance of chaos leads to meaninglessness and obscurity, the complete breakdown of the organization of words even. The individual poet has been forced to make an effort to create a unity in his own soul, where there is chaos all round him. In addition to this, he finds himself in an isolated position. The cultural tradition within which he works is cut off from the lives of the classes of society whose experiences to-day perhaps offer the deepest explanation of the violence forced upon us all. These considerations alone would incline the writer to seek for some orthodox system of thought which offers a wider analysis than his limited range of vision. Moreover, in politics, the isolated figure with a programme and a panacea is a meaningless figure.

However, political orthodoxy has a great disadvantage: it leaves nothing to the imagination. Religious orthodoxy is a structure within which great art can exist, because, however strictly it may be defined, the main terms are mysterious and leave room for invention and contemplation. Such orthodoxy is an iron frame set with a glass looking on to light. But in politics the frame work of action, programme and propaganda is everything.

It is everything because the political will determines that it must be so. But if it is everything, what has poetry to offer? The answer is, an awareness of life in its most naked form.

Poetry penetrates beneath the surface of catchwords and outward conventions, to assert the existence of real needs and a real life underneath. To the poet, the world of actuality is a language in which the life of his time, and hence the life of all time, crushed and distorted, is trying to express itself in skyscrapers and wars and motor-cars and illness and slums. The form of expression, the buildings, the social conventions, the dead hand of the past, the political and religious conventions, the old masquerading as the new and the new as the old, the exploitation of every cause of egotistic motives which are not even apparent to the people who have them; the weight of all this is so tremendous that one might assert that in life the sense of life is the most difficult of all things to maintain. Everything in life tends to become the forms which the past, and the fears and anxieties and greed of the present have imposed on it. Most institutions exist as a denial of, instead of an assertion of, life. The business of the poet is not so much to criticize life as to show where it exists, and to insist that with all its weaknesses and all its needs it does in fact exist.

"All I have is a voice
To undo the folded life,
The romantic lie in the brain
Of the sensual man-in-the-street,
And the lie of Authority
Whose buildings grope the sky:
There is no such thing as the State
And no one exists alone;
Hunger allows no choice
To the citizen or the police;
We must love one another or die."

This voice might at times speak parallel to political voices, but nevertheless it would remain separate from them. The

political aims are acts of will, poetic aims are acts of analysis and revelation and understanding. But political aims can hardly afford to forget poetic aims, any more than the poet can be aloof from the revolutionary politician. A society just in outward forms, might be a dead society, particularly if the politicians imposed a framework of equality on it without ever allowing anyone to ask: "When we have got decent conditions, what then do we do with ourselves?" When the State withers away, the Communist manifesto says there will be no more politics. But if, until then, there is nothing but politics, what will remain?

I can illustrate the distinction I am trying to make by pointing to occasions in history when the life in everyone which is revealed by the drama of the world's creative art, comes to the surface and is expressed as though a great master had suddenly put his words into the mouths of the expressionless many-headed life of his time. In such crisis the needs of life, the significance of every variation of suffering and unhappiness, are suddenly revealed and the life of a day has become an act in a superb play written in lives by history. The French Revolution produced such occasions, when it was enough to paint the crowds in the street, or to write down what the people said. Baudelaire describes the Paris Commune in these terms. Doubtless Alexander Blok's poem *The* 12 sprang directly from the early stages of the Russian Revolution in the same way. Perhaps we ourselves will see and hear such scenes. But the very fact that such occasions emerge from the dumb continuity of what is called civilization, shows that however much it is degraded and silenced, there is a genius of the whole of life, the enormous resources of the unconscious in everyone, the need for love in everyone, which it is the task of the artist of genius—that is, the man in whom the universal genius of life has become most conscious—patiently to insist on and reveal, without bringing to bear to his task any preconceptions and foregone conclusions.

For the politicians to deny or enslave art is madness because

it is to throw away the instruments of sensibility and a particular kind of awareness. For poets to deny it, is a betrayal of their own consciousness. But the poet has yet a further task. In a world of transition in which the values and standards of the past are giving way to new standards, even the meanings of words become lost in the uses of self-interested advertisers and rulers who have no object except to put their own interests in the most flattering light. If words expressing ideas have been used often enough to express debased or even quite contradictory meanings, finally the word loses all meaning, and the idea itself is in danger of becoming lost or treated as meaningless. The task of the poet is to organize words in such a way that their meaning is clear and unmistakable. This is betrayed if the poet takes over the propaganda of political parties and uses words in false contexts. For if the meanings are allowed to become lost, the living values become lost or unrelated to the past contexts in which they have expressed something real. The poet's sensibility to life extends not only to the present but also the past and future. He separates that which is living in the tradition from that which is dead and decaying, and thus is able to relate it to the present. On the one hand, his effort is to prevent the past from choking the present with dead matter; on the other hand, it is to prevent the present from becoming completely cut off so that it exists in a vacuum unable to be compared with the most creative, the most active, the most free expressions of life in the past.

One has only to look around to see that such an attitude is a revolutionary one to-day. Everywhere the living forces of the present and of the past within the present are oppressed and threatened and cut off. Everywhere the standards of the past are debased or exploited or diluted in the interests of political power and commerce. What is required of the artist is sufficient faith in the living forces of the past and present to realise that every true word is a revolt against present conditions.

I

THE MISSION OF POETRY

M. J. TAMBIMUTTU

THE mission of our generation is, in the words of Ortega Y. Gasset, "the subjection of reason to vitality, its localisation within the biological scheme and its surrender to spontaneity. In a few years it would seem ridiculous to have exacted from life an acquiescence in the service of culture. The mission of the new age is, precisely, the conversion of that relation and the demonstration that it is culture, reason, art and ethics that must enter the service of life. . . . Pure reason has, then, to surrender its authority to vital reason."

The reason for my belief that poetry has an important part to play in the fulfilment of this mission of our generation is that poetry has always been the storehouse of all the vital resources of the individual. The importance of poetry in our age, more than in any other age, derives from the fact that we should now view our culture through spontaneity or vitality. This is the inverse of what Socrates and the Cartesian man judged to be the duty of their generation. To me poetry has always been the asseveration of the splendid forces of life, the subjective as well as objective. In it a perfect balance of the two may be reached, the perception of which should enable us to feel and think correctly. These are, after all, the most important conditions of the survival of life.

We may thus evaluate the culture of an age, or analyse its features, from the characteristics of its poetry—from the relative positions taken in it by rationalist and spontaneous values. In a rational age, when culture is a-vital, being out of contact with life, the poetry that belongs to it historically would emphasise the subjective, emotional aspects of our natures. Thus, surrealism historically belongs to our generation whatever may have been the technical errors committed by its protagonists. On the other hand, the Objective Re-

porters' movement, to which I shall return later, was anti-historical in spirit because it was " culturalist " and rationalist in tendency, subduing the nature of poetry to the exactions of abstract principles, which reason or " objectivity " specified as the best. I do not, however, deny it the technical improvements that this movement brought us: condensation, careful observation of external phenomena, and the usage of everyday speech. It was not, however, in the main sensibility of the age which we have already defined. It was, therefore, anti-historical. Like any other biological science, history has, of course, a place for monstrosities.

My thesis that poetry is the storehouse of all the vital resources of man needs further elaboration. I realise as I go on that when I speak of poetry I am not only speaking of verse which we usually imply when we use the term. Poetry means to me the incarnation of all the spontaneous and vital resources of man, the living principle, that is immanent in human activity: in music, in verse, in painting, in cinema, in scientific research, in politics, in photography, in prose. I do not wish to substitute the word " verse " for poetry, but we use words imprecisely, and I would like to state what I mean exactly when I use the word. A more exact definition should be possible, with the aid of the discoveries of psychology, at a later date.

This conception of poetry seems to me valid because it does not attempt to explain it away by a narrowing down of its nature, or a narrowing down of terms which contradict the experiences and conceptions of other people. It is inclusive and not exclusive.

The idea that poetry may be written in prose is now too well known to bear repetition; two examples of the younger poets who practise it are George Barker and Lawrence Durrell. Wordsworth said in a footnote to the Preface of the *Lyrical Ballads:* " I here use the word ' Poetry ' (though against my own judgment) as opposed to the word Prose, and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been

introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact, or Science. The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre: nor is this, in truth, a *strict* antithesis, because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even were it desirable," which seems to support my definition of Poetry. The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre, but metrical language alone does not constitute Poetry: we are given a further lead in the idea that Poetry is opposed to Matter of Fact or Science.

Now the idea popularly held in England by the young avant-garde poets (before the reaction in papers such as *Poetry* (*London*) took place; the reaction had, of course, already occurred in the minds of poets) was the intellectual one that poetry should be ordinary reportage, in the language of everyday speech, of the external world of objects and events. It was held that this attitude represented a "commonsense" view of poetry and was an antidote to "poetic inflation." From Wordsworth's definition, and on their own admission they wanted a Matter of Fact or Scientific language for the objective reportage of the external world of objects and events. The writing of verse was more of a surgical or intellectual process. The poet was asked to excise his individual make-up of emotions lest they coloured his clear perception. In other words, he should sacrifice the realities of his subjective life to culture: to take the case of spiritual life, he should board up the adjective "spiritual" and cut the cables that join it to the substantive "life."

Any art, of course, even though it is predominantly the result of intellectual activity, has its emotional components. But the art produced by the Objective Reporters was distinctly lacking in appeal and validity since it failed to convince the reader, owing to its lack of vitality and emotional content, the strong forces that derive from our subjective natures. The dearth of vitality was, of course, due to not living deeply

enough. The poet had escaped experience behind a smoke-screen of intellectual concepts which were not founded on the realities of experience and life and were therefore false values for living and writing. This state of the 'Thirties was a hangover of the rational age in philosophy which is in essence inimical to the spirit of our own, in which the Cartesian or machine man must eventually be replaced by the human man.

It is easy to narrow down an art to one of its aspects or one function, but more difficult to see it in its entirety, in its various branchings and allotropisms. The Objective Reporters rationalistically narrowed down their conception of verse to the factual reportage of the external world of objects and events, which savours of the attitude of the nineteenth century biologist who refused to consider as vital phenomena those which do not possess corporeal character. This attitude of the Objective Reporters was pseudo-scientific because it did not take into account the individuality of the poet which comprises conscious and unconscious factors whose exact nature we do not as yet know. Human activities are regulated by a double series of imperatives which may be tabulated conveniently as follows :—

ACTIVITIES	IMPERATIVES			
Thought	Cultural	Truth	Vital	Sincerity
Will		Goodness		Emotional Drive
Sentiment		Beauty		Enjoyment

Cultural standards or objectivity is therefore not enough and it should be completed by *self-consistency*, which comprises the whole series of vital imperatives. A work of art may be beautiful for geometrical reasons, and may be objectively of great value, but it must also induce enjoyment in us. Similarly in politics or poetry, a concept may seem true for geometrical or cultural reasons, but it must also inspire absolute faith in us, which is the best ground for its existence. This was where the

Objective Reporters erred. They lost their self-consistency and created their works according to objective laws of Truth, Goodness and Beauty, which rationally seemed the best. In other words, they sacrificed their spontaneous convictions to the demands of culture. The poetry of these machine-men was therefore lacking in those spontaneous and traditional qualities in verse which result from a recognition of the Vital Imperatives. You can neither live nor write according to formula that is not first related to life and consistent with it.

The mission, then, of the living poets is the shouldering of this problem and the demonstration that culture, reason, art are biological functions also, and as such cannot be solely directed by objective laws or laws independent of life, but must be subject to the laws of life; in poetry we should find that Objective standards of Beauty are not enough and that these should conform to vitality, localised within the biological scheme, and surrendered to spontaneity.

THE INDIVIDUAL IN LITERATURE

DEREK D. STANFORD

OURS is an age of egomania and advertisement. Living as we do at the fag-end of the long-lasting Renaissance humanist tradition, the ideals of our time are those of self-aggrandizement. With wireless, poster, headline and news-photo we bolster up the idea of personality; the belief in ourselves as unique and different beings, separated from others by a host of characteristics; our dress, hair-style, affectation and accent. Immersed in the close cultivation of idiosyncrasies we lose our place in common humanity, ignore our relative oneness with the species by fostering the eccentric cell within us in the fond illusion of hatching a genius. In our vast and paltry ambition and pride we forget the stock from which we come, and raise the Man of the Moment above the Spirit of Man. We behave as if our mirror of virtue was the crazy millionaire who floodlit his lavatory. This swollen conception of man, the inflated individual as centre of the universe, can be accurately traced through the medium of literature—further, we can now watch for the turn of the tide as reflected in literature.

The period of the Victorian novel was the saga-age of the Ego par excellence. We feel that we know a character in Thackeray in the way that we know our next-door neighbour. We know his wine-seller, banker and tailor, his annual income and Parliamentary representative. In Trollope and Thackeray we are shown the individual as citizen, churchman, family relation; as a member of some particular profession, town, or class—a review of intricate human differences in direct correspondence with ascending and descending stations of society. The characters of these novels form a study in the varying degrees of self-importance. Each sports the eye-glass of his own estimation; all lack a vision of the human whole. Dickens, in his characters, on the other hand, brings us a little

closer to the essential human core, residing without exception in every human individual. But these figures are all Individualists. Their author has weaned them almost exclusively on their early caprices and prejudices. They fill the rôle of clear-cut human concepts; philanderer, philanthropist, optimist, buffoon. They form an album of types and temperaments suggesting a kind of subjective counter-part to the repertoire of humours by Ben Jonson. But even here, what we get is a presentation of the outside man. The Victorian novelist, like the tailor's fitter, ran his inch-tape over man's exterior. He took stock of all his physical peculiarities with an eye as keen as a caricature-artist's. He noted his mental aberrations, but it was only the superfices of the mind—the individual layout of the land—that attracted him; not the greater depths of the unconscious, where differences merge in a basic physic geography, which present us with a common human denominator.

In the novels of Thomas Hardy we find man stripped of many false differences. The wind of fate blows through the pages ruthlessly tearing the rags of distinction off the backs of haughty characters. High and low are levelled alike, rank and virtue find no exemption. All humanity is subject to one law—of destiny as circumstance. Even here it is not the kernel but rather the shell of the matter we receive, for the nature of fate as Hardy saw it, was in time and environment, external to man. Often it seems that Hardy's conception of fate might be better defined by the word "fortune"—a fortuitous force of coincidence and accident. We have had to wait for the novels of Lawrence to hear that man carried his fate within him; carries his death inside him also, as a woman carries her unborn baby.

To name the novels of Henry James in this pursuit of a common humanity—the search for the old, unchanging Adam, beneath dress-shirt or docker's cap—may at first sight seem the height of irrelevance, like looking for ore in a Bond Street jeweller's. For many his work must no doubt appear as

Individualism's high water mark in fiction. For many his great array of novels, in all their increasing intricacy, their accumulating complexity of distinctions, suggest a monument raised on the peaks of consciousness. His characters are so highly differentiated; people whose names, linen and stationery possess a cachet peculiarly their own. Their lives, in terms of action, so sedentary, are intense with the effort to apprehend; they are lamps of awareness, illuminating events, throwing the light of meaning on the bare surface of outward happenings. Most of these characters, above all, his narrators—those pilots of the "indirect method" in charge of his plots, and through whose eyes we see the story—are gifted with a kind of Epicurean curiosity about themselves and other people. They are eager to exercise the elastic of their personality by extending it with insight and intuition of others. His work, then, stands as I have said, as an apex of consciousness—that continuous effort to observe and understand with the daylight Liberal mind. He represents, historically speaking, the last "highly-strung" attempt by the nineteenth century Individualist to solve the problem of Original Sin without evoking the new power of Collectivism. For Henry James the days of the hairy ape were over. Inheriting by his enthusiasm and sympathy five hundred years of European culture—the high road of Humanism from the Renaissance to the Indian summer of the late nineteenth century—he deemed that man was a civilised being; that civilisation had changed the animal whose development took such a strange turn at the Fall. Salvation, then, or the problem of virtue was one to be answered by the civilising process. Through his experiences of history man had become a more rarified being—a sailor who steered with his sensitivity and whose points of the compass were reflection and perception. In the novels of Henry James we realise the nature of civilisation affecting the behaviour of individuals not as an elaborate ritual alone, a conventional etiquette of expected conduct, but as a sense of courtesy, of sympathetic consideration or allowance for others, what we

might term the ethics of chivalry (an attitude all but completely lost to-day). The characters of Henry James are sensitive plants in the soil of human behaviour. He appealed to what he took to be man's common equality—in short, to his sense of civilization as a guiding principle. We can only respect the noble failure of this error, and regret that civilization proved too flimsy a support; that its permeating power had not penetrated deep enough; that man was not united with man at this exquisite ethereous level.

With the first novel by Lawrence, *The White Peacock*, a new shaft was opened in literary consciousness. It proved to be an uncannily deep one; deeper and darker and more dangerous than those sunny surface drillings that English novelists were in the habit of executing with confectioner's skill upon the comfortable pie-crust of life. From the time of Lawrence and his chronicles of th Id—those narratives of the man in the mind's underground—there has always been a Wing in English literature that made haste to undress the characters in their fiction; to remove the superfluous clothes of individuality and arrive at the essential man underneath, leaving him in the bare skin of an elemental being.

Just as Lawrence might be described as the novelist of the universal unconscious emotions, so for Franz Kafka we might coin the term, novelist of universal unconscious conscience. At first our epithet appears paradoxical; for how, one asks, can the conscience—that register of ethical awareness—be itself an unconscious faculty. The answer depends on our idea of conscience. Should we regard it as an inherited instinct—an acquisition of man's living in history—whose purpose is to act as society's policeman subjectivised, patrolling the labyrinths of our thoughts and flashing the bull's eye of censorship on our hesitations and actions in embryo; should we view it as a cuckoo clock of our social catechism, ringing out the stock responses to the stock stimuli—a mnemonic and automatic moral time-keeper; should we feel it as an intimidating force that bullies and bludgeons rather than

shames us into submission, then we must admit the term a contradiction. But supposing we hold the conscience to be an inborn possession, unique and proper to us; as much a part of man's birthright as his eyes, or ears, or bowels, or heart—an organ bestowed direct from nature and operating thenceforth throughout our existence; supposing we regard it as a measure of harmony; an innate sense of equilibrium, is it not feasible that the centuries' corruption—the rust of history—might have upset the balance, injured the delicate inner spring, repressed it into the unconscious. Society and the State come between man and man; interrupt his real relations with concrete beings, and substitute abstraction. By bringing men in contact with shadowy bodies bereft of personality (the unholy trinity of State, Church and Society), unreal bodies, knowing neither good nor evil, life has removed the reciprocity of relationships—sole guarantor of conscience and virtue. Over the face of the primal conscience this spurious system of social bye-laws is fitted, adapting itself like a rubber mask. Sometimes the superfices twitch and in the sudden momentary convulsion the original conscience expresses itself. So strong does the pressure of external opinion prove with its batteries of Popular Press and dogma, so ubiquitous the stereotyped "word of the law" that the law's true spirit falters and flickers out, retreats back into the dim cave of the conscience.

The intent of Kafka's fiction might be described as an imaginative re-discovery of the conscience. His characters, often dehumanised by their obsession of anxiety, spend their time in a frantic pursuit of the Unknowable or in a blind and terrified flight from the Unknown. Perhaps the mole in one of his stories stands out as a ready-made striking image of the human conscience, working in the dark, harried by doubts, hopes and deceptions, unsure even of its starting point. Perhaps a closer definition of Kafka's work would be to call it a voyage in search of conscience, for the very point of correct procedure and departure, as in his unfinished novel, *The Castle*, is never established with satisfying finality. The goal—to be

equated with God or the Good—is envisaged in his work as the difficult and distant; the starting-point is human frailty, the corrupted conscience, Original Sin. Somewhere between these two the correct route is waiting. That way may be the original conscience; and how to elicit its latent dictates is the problem that his work presents.

Between "a ceaseless condition of apprehension" as Robert Melville termed Kafka's frenzy, and the "fear and trembling" of Kierkegaard exists a resemblance—and a clue. The first concern of Kierkegaard was to juxtapose man and God, to precipitate the climax of direct contact. Against the induced secondary conscience—of the State, the Church, Society and the crowd—those shock-absorbers between man and ethical reality—he warred in the name of the individual. "My task," he wrote, "was as a humble servant, to provoke, if possible to invite, to stir up the many, to press through this defile of "the individual," through which, however, no one can pass except by becoming the individual." And this man achieves by being alone with himself, alone with his conscience and its unmistakable voice. Man then, in being most alone, shares with all men this common germ of God, at the same time most private and universal. "The personality," writes Nicholas Berdyaev (using the term which in Kierkegaard becomes "the individual"), "holds the supreme place in the scale of values. But its supreme value supposes an inherent content surpassing it, a supra-personal element for which it is more than a mere instrument of God."

In the early novels of Ernest Hemingway the stature of man is physical. There is something pathetic in all his toughs and killers—"dumb oxen" as Wyndham Lewis calls them—being so completely at the mercy of their anatomies; men without minds, whose bodies are their all. These are the people to whom things happen; human objects of passive endurance; happy, like unreflecting children in the sun; or plagued they know not why by poverty, hunger and pain. Here the individual has no inner identity. He is separate and distant

from the others because he is placed in opposition to them. Finding himself an antagonistic force set in action by the scheme of things, he lives at cross-purposes with the world in the humble name of self-preservation. Beneath the deadly competition and difference he and his enemy are brothers; one in the body born to love, to bathe in the self-same sea of experience; equal under the sign of the senses; suffering decay, giving birth, receiving death. Again, in the novel, *This Man Murry*, by the American, William Corcoran, mankind is felt to be reconciled beneath the battle for bread and gold, in the unity of its simplest needs and in the fulfilment of its first satisfaction.

The fiction of Socialist Realism which appeared in the magazine *Left Review* and in the early folios of *New Writing*, was largely concerned with the imaginative problem of man's relation to man as a creature of labour. It showed how the unity which work bestows on those who share it is disrupted by the element of production for profit, and how such work is shorn of dignity. "Labour," writes Nicholas Berdyaev, "an essentially spiritual and psychic, rather than a purely material thing as Marx interpreted it. . . . can be a basis of communion as well as society"; and the French philosopher, Haessle, has written a book, *Le Travail*, from a similar angle.

More recently a group of young neo-romantic writers, including Dylan Thomas, Henry Treece, G. S. Fraser, J. F. Hendry, Nicholas Moore and Denys Val Baker, have written fantasies, stories and sketches where the principal character, under a slight disguise is one and the same—the character of man. For whether the story begins with his being a poet, soldier or murderer before the end he becomes just Everyman—any man in a like position, compact of primary hopes and fears in a quivering animal body handed down from Creation. These writers sometimes seem to succeed in putting the spirit of the epic in of the nutshell the episode. Keeping close to the first and last things they have sometimes expressed that common view—the human cry—in the swift, revealing moment.

It seems then as if a new creative current is passing through younger fiction. Observation of detail is giving way to poetic intuition of universal traits. Some unworked vista is now and then glimpsed, opening out in the middle of a phrase, where perhaps the essence of common humanity lies before us awaiting discovery. In his book, *Exploring the Unconscious*, Gerog Groddeck finds a term to describe the first and last anonymous quality—this electronic force that determines all things. He christens it with the simple word "It," behind whose mufti the mystery lies. "The Freudian Unconscious," he writes, "is not what I mean by the It: it comprises only what was conscious at one time or at one stage of development, but has since been lost to consciousness. Together with the conscious mind it makes up the psyche. The unconscious presupposes the existence of the brain, whereas the It produces the brain and everything else that belongs to life. The Unconscious is a part of the psyche, the psyche a part of the It." Speaking to those who would over-use the term to glibly explain the inexplicable, he continues, "Take warning: the word 'It' is popular, but the thing itself which lies behind that word is not so, nor ever can be so, since it assails the vanity of mankind, and disturbs his faith in the 'I,' the ego." These words surely point towards a new conception of our nature and a new humility accompanying it—it remains to be seen how far this conception will be reflected in the fiction of to-day and to-morrow.

CONTEMPORARY MUSICAL COMPOSERS

GEOFFREY CUMING

To the music-lover of discernment the most bewildering feature of contemporary music is its variety of idiom. No doubt in two hundred years' time, the music of 1900-40 will present as uniform an appearance as does that of 1700-40 to us. The music critics of that period draw the most definite distinctions in style between composers who appear to us merely typical "period" writers, and detect national characteristics which have completely evaporated by now. The situation to-day is the same; every composer seems to speak in a strongly individual voice, and, since the development of the nationalist ideal, he addresses himself only to his compatriots, who alone can appreciate his music to the full, and alone can do justice to its interpretation. It is early yet to distinguish schools and trends in the music of our time, and, besides, mere labelling is of little use to anybody. The most that can be done to present contemporary music in a rational manner is to single out the composers who have found the widest acceptance. Certain inconsistencies are inevitable in fixing a time limit; many composers who flourished *c.* 1910 were in spirit part of the nineteenth century, so, instead of dealing with all composers born after, say, 1850, I shall only consider those who are living to-day, though I would gladly write of Debussy and Ravel, not to speak of Holst, Berg and Warlock.

Three figures stand out from the crowd in low relief: Strauss, Sibelius and Vaughan Williams. Strauss is universally acknowledged as a great composer (but so was Meyerbeer until the turn of the century); he was an international figure forty years ago, with a reputation based on violence of impact, luxuriant orchestration and the adoption of complex literary programmes. The great series of "tone poems" ended about

1900, after which opera monopolised his attention; but though he has turned out specimens with remarkable steadiness every few years, not since before the last war has he produced a work of any durability. The *Rosenkavalier* is Strauss at his greatest. The commonplaceness of his melodic invention is here camouflaged by the extensive use of Viennese waltz-idiom, and there is plenty of scope for that bitter-sweet nostalgia which is the swan song of Wagnerian Romanticism (*cf.* Mahler and Elgar). Of the tone-poems, *Till* and *Don Juan* seem likeliest to survive because of their comparative brevity; there is some good stuff in *Don Quixote*, and *Heldenleben* will always attract virtuoso conductors. His popularity will probably decline steadily for fifty years or so.

Sibelius is a very different personality. Though widely revered in Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries, he has no following in France or Germany. He stands well apart from the European tradition, starting from Tchaikovsky, Borodin and Grieg where Strauss stems from Brahms, Liszt and Wagner. His output falls into two entirely distinct categories: a vast quantity of light music for the theatre and salon, and a small number of works (seven symphonies, half-a-dozen tone poems, a concerto and a string quartet) which are among the finest achievements of any age. Here a rigid intellectuality eliminates the unworthy elements which disfigure so much of Strauss, and a rhythmically-generated physical excitement replaces the tawdry sensuousness of the German school. Yet he is not the stark and brooding figure some conductors would have him. His palette is the lovelier for its restrained handling, and though he rarely relaxes into heart-searchings there is plenty of contemplative emotion of a more durable nature. He has a considerable influence upon composers of the countries in which he is popular, and will undoubtedly "last."

Vaughan Williams is a great composer for many Englishmen, and for hardly anyone else. The parochiality of his earlier works has prevented the really great works from receiving abroad the recognition which they deserve. Perhaps he is too

English for complete enjoyment even by Americans, who take more kindly to cosmopolitan composers like Walton and Britten. Yet nobody can question the greatness and universality of the themes he handles, or deny that he takes their measure. The purely instrumental works of his maturity have unfortunately failed to convince in the same degree as the great choral works, which depend more on the nationality of the hearer, and it is this alone which prevents an appreciation as enthusiastic as that accorded to Sibelius. Vaughan Williams moves more happily with the help of words and voices, and his abstract music though fine and characteristic is most enjoyed by those who know the whole of his work.

For English musicians at any rate, these three must be reckoned great composers. Beside them is a host of lesser figures of whom I will attempt to select the more permanently significant, an invidious and highly controversial job. First, two traditionalists, Dohnanyi, a Brahmsian with a strong Hungarian accent and a sense of humour; Turina, the most Franckian of Spanish composers, with a nice, sensuous vein. Of the modernists, Schonberg and Stravinsky claim the first consideration. Twenty years ago both were enjoying a *succes de scandale*, but neither has established his position by more recent productions. Schönberg is the apostle of the twelve-tone system, according to which each composition is based on an arbitrary *ad hoc* selection of notes (called a tone-row). This is a far cry from his own early works, which were typical decadent romanticism of the post-Wagnerian era, contorted harmony and exacerbated voice parts. Gradually he drifted further and further from the convential key-system, till eventually with *Pierrot Lunaire* he cut right adrift and launched out into "atonality." His followers, Berg, Webern, Krenek, the "Viennese" school, have taken his lead in making composition a purely intellectual process of mathematical regularity. It is doubtful whether posterity will regard his music as other than a curio. Stravinsky made his name by a series of ballets, in which he outdid Rimsky-Korsakov in the brilliance of his

orchestration, culminating in the notorious *Rite of Spring* where he pushes rhythm to such a degree of subtlety that it ceases to be recognisable. Then he turned his back on colour and emotion, and wrote a series of abstract works of a flat cacophony that attracted the attention of the chosen few. He has continued to do so, becoming flatter with every work though always technically ingenious ; his most popular works of the twenties were ballets based on the music of Pergolesi and Tchaikovsky. History has no parallel for his chameleon changes of style, but few of the later works have remained in the repertoire.

Next is a group of three nationalist composers : Falla, Bloch and Bartok. Falla, a Spaniard, has achieved fame with fewer works than any other composer. His intense self-criticism has placed him with Smetana, Moussorgsky and Grieg as a nationalist composer whose nationalism gives him international appeal, though he lacks the wider qualities of a Dvorak or a Tchaikovsky. Falla writes lovely, clean, sharp music, of an essential Spanishness, not intellectual, or even emotional, but impressionistic, with more vitality than most composers of that persuasion. Unfortunately he has published nothing for fifteen years. Bloch's nationality is dubious, as he oscillates between Switzerland and America, but his race is unmistakable. He first (apart from some virtuoso pieces by Bruch) introduced the Hebrew spirit into music. Like so many of his time, he started as an orthodox Debussyan, but soon found himself as the exponent of a barbaric, querulous music relieved with moments of the profoundest calm. He has been pushed by a small set, but the general public find him too unvaried. This is chiefly from unfamiliarity ; he has a fine and attractive personality and original things to say. His recent Violin Concerto is a compelling work with some moments of exquisite colour unlike anybody else's. He should eventually reach the class of " great " composers. So should Bartok, who ten years ago was regarded as a great folk-music expert who had regrettably adopted an eccentric style of composition, treating the piano as

a percussion instrument. Then his later quartets caused him to be classed with Schönberg as an unintelligible introvert. Now he has begun to pour forth a series of works in which passion is controlled by intellectual clarity, and which apparently appeal to the least sophisticated. His music is harder to describe on paper than that of any other composer, owing to its lack of sensuous effect. One can only point to the superb organisation and depth of feeling now suddenly revealed.

Of the younger composers of note, the best known are Prokofiev, Hindemith and Walton. Prokofiev began as an amusing emigré Russian, and is now a recognised Soviet composer. In the process of changing politics, he abandoned much of his early personality, notably the cheeky tunes with wry harmonies, and passed through a stage of rather ordinary lyricism. Now he writes music of a popular nature (*Peter and the Wolf*) or of orthodox Soviet inspiration (*Alexander Nevsky*). Hindemith is a tremendously prolific composer, holding the view that music should be written for use. The result is that all his work is very much the same, cheerfully ugly or characterlessly sad. Walton is the likeliest of the three to produce some really great work. An eclectic in his sources of inspiration, he has perfected his technique while simultaneously becoming more and more reticent in addressing his audience. The Violin Concerto of 1939 is only a more complex replica of the Viola Concerto of 1929. But if he can let himself go, as in parts of the Symphony, he will shake the world.

Several composers of promise, of whom Shostakovich and Benjamin Britten are outstanding, would be included in this survey but for the paucity of material yet available for a considered verdict.

There remain some composers of considerable popularity at home and little abroad. Among English composers, Bax, Ireland and Bliss; Bax, a devotee of colour and harmony but careless of form, Bliss, inheritor of a legacy from Elgar. In France, Milhaud, Honegger and Poulenc, survivors of a

group called "Les Six"; typically French of the nineteen-twenties, now sobered down. That goes for Casella, too, among the Italians; the other Italians, Pizzetti and Malpiero, are on the dull side. Kodaly is another Hungarian folk-expert, writing with great charm, and Weinberger, a Czech, wrote the only popular opera of the twenties (apart from *Turandot*), *Schwanda the Bagpiper*.

As I have said, there is no way as yet of evaluating these composers; one can only use the rough criterion of popular acceptance, which though slow to light upon a great composer, never ignores him entirely. Even if at times this article seems to speak with the voice of Soames Forsyte, it is only because there is no other way of indicating which composers best repay the outlay of time and attention which contemporary music requires. Personal prejudices are bound to enter in, but the appeal to the public will discount them. The greater danger is the labelling necessary to achieve concision without sacrificing readability: I can only hope that none of these hastily awarded epithets will be held against me in twenty years' time.

SOCIAL CONVENTIONS OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN FILM

ALEX COMFORT

THE particular series of conventions to which film stories—commercial ones—must conform is pretty stringent; produced, one is told, more or less empirically on an analysis of box office returns. The pictures which are bounders, like "Green Pastures" or "Thunder," get a financial bastinado where they most deserve it.

But there is a less conscious and more rigid basis for the scheme of adaptation than this. It is essentially a propagandist, though negative, scheme: it is directed to the avoiding of upsets in the equilibrium. Cinemas have, I think, an average weekly attendance of about one and a half times the total adult population. Their ubiquity, cheapness, comfort, and their unique technical control over the inside processes of their audience—the darkness, the increased atmospheric fug, the focus of attention on a bright light—hypnotic adjuvants only equalled at High Mass—place them extremely, dangerously, deep in the structure of social life, and the alligator over whom a native village has been erected cannot afford to have convulsions.

Perhaps all that is as it should be. Nobody wants to see a Saturday audience lashed up to incendiary fury. That the whole propaganda of the American cinema has been negative—a damping device on social oscillations which might upset the dovetailing of American society—does not matter very much, But when the seismic focus is outside the society, as the present war is in a measure outside our own—we did not demand it consciously, that is—we begin to demand rather more from the cinema than the singsong of the hypnopaedic nursemaid in our ear, that it will be all right, provided we lie quiet a little longer. The vested interest foot rule is a good inch short, but it goes on being applied. In the light of this, and without demanding

that the present film industry should show any enthusiasm for social change, it is profitable to analyse the set of conventions by which film plots are manufactured or doctored.

In this context I wish to make it clear that I am not interested, here, in the purely technical considerations of the film, or in its limitations as art. There is a particular reaction of psychological forces which, more or less inevitably, is producing wartime films. They are far more valuable as an index of the mental aberration of our particular form of society than as creative products—the very fact that most films are derived from garbled versions of dramatic sequences which were conceived in another medium. Most of us would agree that with few exceptions, by comparison with French and Russian cinemas, the productions of Anglo-American producers which make up the bulk of the average show are both artistically contemptible and intellectually deficient. It is not the plants which merit research but the soil in which they grow.

I am also setting aside gross considerations of political expediency; there are in existence three film versions of "For Whom the Bell Tolls"—one a transcription of the story minus the hero's death, one set in Ruritania to avoid reference to Spain, and a third made after protests from Franco's envoy. I merely wish to state a few general principles which lead audiences to accept the rubbish which they now do.

(*a*) That failure, except in the case of public enemies, is unpalatable just as much to the working and middle classes who attend the cinema as it is to the Marxist Upwardites. The level of tragedy is therefore to be approached only by way of compensation, e.g., the hero is blind but famous, dead but at least morally vindicated, etc., or by way of a stylisation which severs the connection with real life and prevents the point from turning on the audience. The three chief fears of the respectable American are bodily death, insanity, social change of a cataclysmal character. The suggestion of these must in consequence be excluded or so covered with flowers or verbiage as to be palatable. Mamoulian's treatment of the end of

" Sangre y Arena " was one of the best instances for a very long time. Ibanez' own treatment recoiled too much upon the audience, the " veritable brute." Therefore we were faded out upon a moral oration and a chapel—sure winners, especially when the orator is Linda Darnell.

(*b*) Being left therefore with only comedy and melodrama as forms, tragedy where it cannot be escaped must be converted by a god from the machine. Sometimes the god is on the screen, as in the adaptation of " The Grapes of Wrath," or off it, as a postscript by Mr. A. V. Alexander to " Love on the Dole," where the poignant treatment was obviously the work of producers, and was regarded as dynamite by their owners. (That picture had a red light in front, also, telling us that England was the only country where it could be shown). On Murray's view, one remembers that Euripides had to do something rather similar with the " Orestes "—the common convention being that if one raises an emotional storm, one must lay it before the end-slide. It is not fair to attribute this requirement to a capitalist society. Athenian slave-democracy made the same demand, and Mr. Upward's marxism would be as ready to invoke it against the suggestion of failure or personal decease. The author must adroitly head off his audience before they get there, as O'Casey finds himself forced to do at the end of " The Star Turns Red "—" He died for life, for life is everything and Death is nothing. . . ."

(*c*) Imaginative treatment, except in farce, which somehow slips through, is generally taboo. But there is a premium on encouraging the audience to pretend that it is imagining—to appeal to the conscious, and let it humbug itself that there is something profound and mystical underlying. Seeing " Fantasia " one was very conscious of this witch-doctor technique—the method of overaweing as a substitute for the imaginative. At its least offensive this practice appears as a continuation for five minutes too long of almost every film, even the best, the time being taken up with a speech or a sunset to fill the demands of (*b*) preceding. This again is not

to be blamed on the producer only. His audience is so far discouraged by its education and its place in society from all things imaginative, and it has so great a terror of them, linked with its terror of insanity, that the fantastic, unless you divert the attention by farce, is nearly impossible. The fantasy of Mickey or Harpo depends upon this diversion. It is like firing a gun behind a patient in order to pull a tooth while his attention is distracted, and under the circumstances it often succeeds. Any violation of the same conventions in serious drama, would terrify the audience out of the hall. Harpo can be a Meredithian Comic Spirit where Caligari cannot.

The conventions of the Athenian tragedy differed from those of the film in their high ethical impulse and their at least superficially fearless inquiry. The ethics of the film are far more rigid but far timider. The timidity is apparent chiefly in the field of sexual morality, where I dare not waits perpetually upon I would. Adultery is disapproved, but regarded as a feature of normal life, and it must constitute the plot motif of at least half of those films where that is not provided by murder or by robbery. The attitude to all heterosexual offences—homosexual being as rigidly excluded by the film industry as "f——" is by the libraries—is an ambivalent one of sympathy internally and disapproval externally. The producer enlists the sympathy of his audience on behalf of the illicit lovers, and contrives at the same time to preserve their respectability by the death or heroic renunciation of the unwanted third. The same principle holds good in innumerable success stories where the desired object cannot be obtained by morally defensible methods and the god has to be invoked again to procure the wish-fulfilment. This solution differs from melodrama in being morally far more deleterious. One can imagine Macbeth wishing in the same way for the miraculous removal of Duncan, Donalbain, and the rest. In a society of physically and mentally thwarted people, its repetition year by year in conditions ideal for suggestion is likely to prove ruinous.

The ethical attitude of the film to murder is different. In spite of the morbid fascination with which the inevitable crime is regarded in civilized countries, the inter-war morality of the films classed it as venial under a great diversity of circumstance. On the occasions where it is not a stylised problem for solution, or its perpetrator an " enemy of society," gain, jealousy, self defence, and quasi-military situations are all accepted as sufficient defence against a charge. Last-minute reform is another. It is hard to conceive what impression of our form of society the film would leave on a savage. The profit motive is recognized as the key to a great deal of criminal action, and the tacit approval or disapproval of the " management "—and with it the audience—depends upon whether the perpetrators are on our side or theirs.

In this connection it is important to realise that all or very nearly all film characters are divided into teams, like chessmen. Actions which are identical become good or bad according to the colour of the agent. The society envisaged by the film industry divides readily into the Good, which includes all characters, selected quite arbitrarily, for whom sympathy is invoked, our side as opposed to the Huns, Japs, or crooks (albeit a crook may very well be elected to honorary citizenship of the other team) and certain classes, such as mothers, pretty, as opposed to seductive, women, and musicians : and " enemies of society," a loose group, including foreign nationals, as a rule, all opponents of the American Way of Life, criminals not favoured with the author's sympathy, or who set up as rivals to the hero in his wish fulfilment motive, and classes such as extremists, pacifists, spies for foreign powers, Germans, and a good few others. The extreme interest of this type of simplification is the readiness with which it could conform to the Aryan concept. It is a property of unelevated human psychology, especially when in pursuit of a wish-fulfilment, to look for a *caput vulpinum*. I do not know whether the increasing anti-semitism of films here and in America—paralleled very closely in the novel—is significant. But the watershed

classification, the new predestinism which justifies an act in one which it condemns in another cannot help having social importance, especially when a facial character such as blackness, a moustache, or a Yid nose, is selected by the casting authority to underline the point. The thugs are played by the same actors in every film.

With the advent of war, the underlining of all these artistic and ethical conventions has become very marked. It was easy to transfer the Our Side—Their Side morality to contemporary events, since Nazi soldiers on the march look funny in any case if one isn't too close, and Huns were already sinister. Killing again needed no justification, except in the case of characters such as Sergeant Yorke, directed against the natural qualms of the decent man, who could inject a little benign comedy into his mowing down of Germans. British film propaganda has swallowed bodily the ready-made conventions, and "49th Parallel" was its most conspicious interpretation of them. I have not seen the German counter-blast about Kruger and the Boer war, but it is probably similar. War has only intensified the psychological nexus which underlay the inter-war film, and which the film has presented as an accurate interpretation—which it was—of the social institutions and above all the personal aspirations of the English and American middle class. It was to this end that we had to witness that endless procession of familial pictures—Andy Hardy, the Joneses, the Capra middle class pictures, the interminable pictures about the smart husband and the dumb wife, *ad nauseam*. The minor American picture was a celluloid incarnation of the aggregate morality of those parts of society which had never been either very rich or very poor, and were proportionately out of touch with reality. The facile acceptance of absolute judgments on conduct lies very deep in this aggregate.

The cinema audience is adolescent in mind. When we agree—as we would not have agreed three years ago—that the bombs which the Germans drop on us are beastly, while those which we drop upon them, and upon our former allies, are

heroic, we are only accepting as real the imaginary classification of motive upon which the film plot depends. The way had been laid for Vansittart by Sexton Blake. It is a part of a world which most of us will recall as belonging to the gang days of adolescence. From this same reservoir of mental immaturity comes the conception of humour in this whole group of pictures. Satire is so rare, so laboured, or where it is sufficiently fantastic to be amusing, as in " The Great Dictator," so intimately mixed with the unfunny, that its place is negligible. Probably no class is more sensitive to satire directed against itself than that from which the volkgeist of the film is drawn. One saw this well in the diversion of " Kiss the Boys Good-bye " from its original target, the film industry. Comedy of a kind—of this kind—injected into film characterization is not without purpose. It is used in part to prevent negro or working-class characters from presenting too dignified an appearance. One saw well in " Manpower "—a splendid plot for Zola—how characters which might have been memorable were ragged in this way. And apart from satire, the chief topics of humour are personal appearance, stupidity—which can be a lovable quality in a member of Our Side, especially a woman—sex, in an adolescent and harmless form, drink, and destructive slapstick. Even the more fantastic comedies exploit the fat arse and the custard pie in their own way.

From our analysis of the pre-war film we can see that just as the elements of the present situation, its aimlessness, its anti-cultural and anti-intellectual bias, and its euphoric self-confidence, were latent in the mind of the nation, so the germ of the ideal " war film "—i.e., pep film, containing nothing subversively like thought—was present in almost every minor American picture. The basic features necessary for a successful propaganda addressed to the middle and upper working class in favour of a continued war are these :—

(*a*) The ready acceptance of Our Side versus Their Side convention.

(*b*) A stylization of violence, especially killing, into a

spectacle in which the victim is a symbol and no residual element of horror survives.

(*c*) An uncritical interpretation of the aggregate mind of those classes, with an insistence upon security, the enemy being always identified with change, and difficult or tragic situations being bridged by speeches in the ordinary Churchillian general terms.

We can here differentiate between the war pictures produced in this country under semi-official auspices and those produced free-hand in America by producers having not the slightest conception of what was in fact the popular temper. The former, almost without exception, adopt an undertone of explanatory condescension. The Our Side—Their Side convention is never stated but assumed. The special pleading is never at all skilfully concealed, as it is in most Russian pictures, since such concealment is not necessary. In the first of our war-time pictures, " The Lion Has Wings," we had the whole outfit, the dutiful, cheery, pull-together attitude, the sudden news that we were all one happy family fighting for the *status quo*, the pictures showing how we (during the slump years) spent all our money on social reform, while the Germans heiled and bought guns, and much more of the same kind. The latest pictures, " Ships with Wings," and " 49th Parallel " have moved immeasurably from that insincere and tiresome viewpoint. The common factor of all these pictures, and of war propaganda in general, remains, however, the attempt to de-humanise as far as possible the enemy and his works. It is impossible to maintain a war against a human enemy, especially if it be a war which depends upon middle class support. If the middle class can but descry its opposite number in the enemy's ranks, the war is suddenly resplit upon another plane. In the main, we have employed the same mechanism of personal appearance, speech, and so forth, as was used to de-humanise the Enemy of Society in the earlier crime pictures. The ridiculous aspects of the enemy, goose-steps and salutes, are made disproportionately emphatic. The " foreignising " of

the German pilots' faces in " The Lion has Wings," by comparison with the chubby collegians manning our fighters : the close-up views of Hitler shouting : all these were directed to appeal, not to our sense of the moral wrongness of our opponents' policy, but to an exaggeration of the hostile emotions of foreign-ness, strangeness and so forth. But latterly the emphasis has altered on this side of the Atlantic, and while public opinion has in a measure responded to the earlier efforts of our propaganda, we now have pictures like " Ships with Wings," and " 49th Parallel " in which the enemy is credited with skill, courage and (misguided) determination. Both these pictures are striking by comparison with, say, " Pastor Hall " or " Professor Mamelock," in their absence of definitive aim, other than " to win the war." *The film, even the official film, is returning to its original role, of interpreter of the mood of the middle strata of society.*

So much for the capitalist film. I wish to avoid discussing, for the moment, the Marxist interpretation of what I have said —namely that the particular forms of thought-process which I have described are peculiar to capitalist audiences and industries, and are superseded where art is enlisted by Socialism. I feel that this view is far truer in the sphere of semi-applied art to which the film belongs than in any other—in poetry, for example, it is manifestly false, as judged by the atrocious quality of most modern socialist verse which attempts to speak for a section of the people. The Russian film industry leads the world in every sphere except photographic technique—it is truly popular in its conception and execution, it strikes an accurate balance between protagonism and crowd-sequence, and it is devoid of almost all the maudlin quality which is so grotesque and offensive in our own films. But the impulses to which it appeals, though with infinitely greater skill, are identical. The socialist film, which is admittedly propagandist, aims at the same evocation of a *dual* ethical standard and a *dual* valuation of character. It has the identical fear of failure and it ignores personal death in exactly the same vapour of phrases

(if it is to preach personal courage it could hardly fail to do so) because by becoming subjects or electors of a socialist state, the audiences are largely unchanged in their fears, desires, and outlook. Fantasy takes a far larger part, especially in Russia, where there is a folk-culture not only at hand but still in existence. Yet the weapons remain the same even when the decayed conceptions of society are superseded by new ones.

Again, in this attempt to gloss over death and evoke personal courage, fear is a weapon which is very readily employed in the building of that unreasoning hatred necessary to a belligerent government. The atrocity story has been one of the main lines of attack by which the allied governments induce their subjects to continue hostilities. And again, the films of various nations, England ("Ships with Wings"), America ("Hitler's Children"), Russia ("The Avengers" and numerous news reels), and Germany (in a high proportion of the pictures now made, but not available here), show no great differences in the tone or the nature of their atrocity propaganda. The widest use has been made in Russia and the second widest in America and Germany. Now the psychology of the atrocity story, especially when it is presented by the film in a form far more graphic than any printed book, is interesting, since it is not so simple as it appears. If we define the atrocity as a true or untrue account of cruelty designed to stir up hatred, we must recognize that the first reaction of a human audience is not disgust but sexual satisfaction. The satisfaction in the normal subject is never quite conscious, though excitement is consciously felt, and there is an immediate reaction of the super-ego against it. The audience undergoes a violent denial of that satisfaction accompanied by shame or anger occasioned by it, and it is this shame or anger which is projected against the enemy. That explains why the ambivalent morality of the films accepts the atrocity so readily.

The relief of being *able* to admit and sanction the erogenic action or thought, since its victim is *a member of the other side and therefore does not matter*, is counter-balanced by the pleasure

of veiling the repudiated and shame-producing desire in anger against the perpetrators of the deed. Apart from this, conscious sadomasochism is far from rare—it is not without meaning that "Miss Blandish" and "Hitler's Children," both pornography, the second of them having for its leading attraction the flogging of Miss Bonita Granville by a storm-trooper and containing many easily-recognised desmophiliac and mastigophiliac fantasies—drew very large audiences who professed disgust and came three or four times. I touch on this, because the atrocity story is increasing so enormously in political importance, and because the film is the ideal way of applying it. The motive, one should add, is always either openly or symbolically sexual—the bombing of Rotterdam or Dusseldorf is not an "atrocity," while a solitary rape is—and this element constitutes an exception to the normal prudery of capitalist pictures. (Russian atrocity pictures, one should add, display on the whole a sexual reticence which is devastatingly skilful and quite unlike the pruriency of "Hitler's Children".)

The American pictures of pre-belligerent days, except such as were designed to "sell" conscription to the hostile American youth—"Caught in the Draft," and so on, have never departed from this role. One can pick out a number of recurrent motifs, of which the chief are :—

(1) A prurient curiosity about the details of war, the actual experiences of the bombed and the victims.

(2) A movement to interpret in terms of inaccurate spectacle, on which the most prominent Our Side character, the reporter, airman or detective is projected.

(3) A condescending attitude to the belligerent, implying that all that was needed was a little American leadership.

The results of Pearl Harbour are slowly beginning to appear. The Japanese has taken his rightful place as the *caput vulpinum* (there was at least one picture designed to encourage the beating-up of individual Japanese domiciled in the U.S.A.) and he is regarded with a ferocity and a contempt which is barbaric in the extreme, and differs from our own hatred of

Germany in kind. The main attempt of the official propagandists is to render the Japanese contemptible by such means as the humorous treatment of their death or disablement. These have, however, been films like "Air Force," bearing most of the old blemishes but recognizably realistic, and making one wonder whether war realism may not yet count from America.

I have said nothing of documentaries. The success of "Britain Can Take It" was no doubt due in part to (1) above, and that of "Target for To-night" to the same factor, combined with its almost unique realism. The only hint of film orthodoxy which one detects there is the stylised bombing, with models, of inanimate objects such as enemy gunners and railway lines, the avoidance, very adroit, of the hint that the bombed town contained inhabitants; and the fact that "all our aircraft returned safely." But there was a sudden capturing of the incredible aspect of this war, that a man may sleep at home one night and be in action the next, and return to his normal surroundings after—facts which must be almost intolerable to the pilot, and which have never otherwise been brought home.

Pictures dealing with conditions in occupied territory are too many to describe. One can only say that if they really represent the ideas of conditions in Europe which our leaders hold, God help Europe if we win. The touching faith shown by pictures like "The Day will Dawn," that whole populations go about reciting Churchillian speeches with more or less bated breath is as unspeakable as it is nauseating. (In this picture, by the way, just before the sheriff and his posse rushed in, there was a moment when the producer tottered on the brink of realism. It was as though an icy wind had blown over the audience. For one second the Robin Hood drivel was suspended, and one saw an elderly German soldier putting down sawdust against a wall where the prisoners were to be shot. The audience was stricken by it. Then in dashed the bloody Commandos, and we were back in the world of soothing-syrup and unconditional surrender). There is Renoir's magnificent picture, "This Land

is Mine," a triumph for his sense of proportion, which has been attacked during its first week because the hero shows cowardice. There has been endless bilge of the calibre of the Mikhailovitch picture, an insult to the intelligence of everyone concerned, and detective stories like Lang's " Hangmen also Die," an essay in pure and very effective unreality. There was the Lidice film made in Wales, a step in the right direction, possessing reticence and at least evoking real people. In another sphere, there was " In Which We Serve," shapeless, brilliantly directed, failing, in accordance with the general principles which I have laid down, by its senseless and uncomprehending clowning of working-class parts. (Funny, to see a Whitechapel audience laughing its head off at a family hiding under the stairs in a raid. Memories aren't long.)

Because of the place which the cinema holds in our society, there has been no Emil Zola so far to interpret the tragedy of Europe. That a film produced like " Thunder " for excommunication may capture some elements of it is possible. After the war is over, a continental producer will almost inevitably experiment in an unbiassed and analytical realism. One detected a hint, a mere shadow of this in the German pictures of war in Russia, made for a very different end. If " Le Debacle " is to be written for this war in celluloid, however, one can be confident that it will not tour the cinemas. It is only necessary to think how, in the light of " The Grapes of Wrath," commercial producers would treat " Germinal," that most emimently filmable of novels, to realise the depth of the gulf. Would such a document be hedged around, like " Love on the Dole," with political barbed wire and red lights? Would it ever be made? I am pretty sure it won't. Until the death-struggles of the middle class, as a class, are complete, a process which may involve Hollywood as well as Singapore, the minor film will remain its mouthpiece, an instrument of national psycho-auto-analysis. Its conventions and its social institutions, and above all its frame of mind, will be imposed upon every plot which is adapted or written.

BETWEEN THE BARRIERS

Between the muscle and the hammer-head,
The liquor and the veinous leaf it feeds ;
Between the vision and the throne of God,
The promise and the still-born shrouded words,

Between the hope that flies, the fear that dives,
The beak of hawk, the pretty breast of wren ;
Between the husk that dries, the seed that thrives,
The fire that flames, and that which leaves the pen ;

Stand blood, its channel and the broken cross,
The bed unslept-in and the worn-down shoe,
The fruit of pity and the breath of Christ,
And all the bones kissed clean beneath the sea.

And would you say it, even if you could,
Smash cage and let the weary words fly free ?
Might that not let the tigers from the wood,
And madness ride across the morning sky ?

HENRY TREECE.

SPEAKS FROM THE CLOUD

Blow out the pages from my hand, the book of wisdom
That is mine to writ, but which I cannot write.
For all my wisdom is the rock's by the sea,
Or the sea-gull screaming for fish. I do not know.

The wind is speaking from the cloud in the end,
Nor do gods live there, nor do men conceive
Cloud-children in the womb of time, but die
Up in the fabulous reaches of the sky.

The voice speaks. The hand is numb and trembles,
And no man dares to write the truth in the heart.
It seems so simple and sad. He makes up lies
To cheer or damp his own cloud-weathered face.

Forgets not gull nor rock, nor sea. Forgets not self
Nor pain. Forgets not life, nor death, nor blood.
But all the time speaks from the rocky cloud
A voice he does not understand or heed.

Fishes' wisdom, owls' wisdom, the wisdom of the tree,
Of the man clawing for God on the cross:
Does not the voice speak better from the cloud,
The thunder better than the gun to the blood?

NICHOLAS MOORE.

FIRE NO DESIRE

Now in the dark and haunted cave of time
The already dead droop round the dying lamp;
I will make heard my reed note in the snow,
The frozen hand still tapping at the pane.

In this harsh spring desire dies,
Or like the soiled crocus in the mud,
Hides beneath the brittle elms,
And no roads lead to summer and the sea.

We wait and mildly yield to a wilder song
Stark in the winds that bring the bitter month,
April in whose sharp fires our world shall burn,
Gone with old loves, old habits, ashes in the rain.

WREY GARDINER.

EASY NOW IS ENVY

Easy now is envy for the chattering nest
Concealed by the sycamore tree's bright cluster
Of leaves ; for a bird's careless flight and zest ;
For green memories of the upper reaches
Of a river ; and of still time on warm beaches
Of summer relegating beyond the confine
Of its sweet oblivion the treacherous thunder
On the jagged horizon. And to say " Live like the line
On the smooth sand careless of who teaches
A tide's approach," or " be brief like the lotus flower
On the flat surface of a river's sunshine."

But just as (so long as man survive)
Such envy can never arrest the deep whine
Of melancholy's sure foreknowledge of night—
That intimation of past and future which breaches
Each exquisite present, and is man's prerogative ;
So neither with bird-nesting boys, or stones
Catapulted against the lotus leaves, or with guns
And bombs or any other weapon, shall it indict,
Exhaust, or destroy its insatiable appetite.

F. BUCHANAN.

PLAINT OF THE WORKING-MEN

Why do you revile us, the unfortunate ones?
Who have lived our lives greyly, without harm,
Without wish or any wanton desire to harm,
Content with our crooked huddle of squinting houses
Where the soot came in, and the roar
Of traffic and gnash of machines was our lullaby;
Content to live and let live? . . .

Why should the bomb stalk us who are unworthy of notice
And the sweat-wrung money needed to kill a man?
Whose only vice was a pint and the twopenny pools,
Who tightened our belts in the slumps and went to the sea
When summer came and we had the railway fare
What are we to the fat old men who rule us?

Only desirous of sleep and sun in the window,
Of sufficient food and tobacco and a drink or two;
And for us who are young, a girl whose ways are rare
And the trees throwing silent echoes into her eyes
This, lord and master and factory boss, is our petition,
And though it is worldly and selfish it is all we desire.

ROY MCFADDEN.

PATTERN

The light and darkness bred me. The light in my blood and the darkness,
The surge and recession, opposition of pain and peace. I am this,
And the fruit of this, fire struck from the conflict, power point to release
Time from timelessness, name from namelessness, and essence of life and death.

Then how should I be timeless, time I made be endless? How should I know
More than the leap and sinking of the blood, roots lapping mud's rich darkness,
Shoots way working to light, swelling of green to crimson, pain to crimson,
To peace and fury of the bursting hour? And then the minutes falling
One by one, fading, seed back to darkness, failing, a withering wind.

O fleet, fleet, fleet and sweet! I only know that in the dirt is sweetness
And in the heart is greatness and defeat, the darkness and the brilliance,
The white wave surging shoreward, the retreat. Nothing is certain but this.

Time is a work of art, complete, imposing conventions on the mind
By which mind moves, sap runs in rose and blood at full tide flows to scatter
On sand its waves, ending its love. But mind rebels, calls faith to retrieve
Time bloodless from the grave, or childlike cuddles a sawdust love to sleep.

SYDNEY D. TREMAYNE.

SHOP WINDOW

In the confused magnificence of love
is no community, but unsharing crowds
of shuttered faces where on secrets move;
but a perpetual early-closing day.
The tender lust that sanctifies our bloods,
that flowered by companionship, the way
of the moth's mind, they neither feel nor speak,
haunted with flames: our world's a spirit-walk.

Behind the dreaming shutters of our faces
the spider fingers thoughts, and we dissect
with sharp artistic hands our gains and losses;
build the mosaic of a filtered world.
We hand a blinding arras upon the fact,
for wild, wild unpardonably wild
the roaring of the outer enmity,
Yet we, being islanded, will draw down that sea.

Never believe us; poets tell you lies:
the burglar breaks the window, and the door
blows inward, and the pictures tatter loose.
The snarler with hooked fingers, or the man
with nooses, throw a shadow on the floor.
Sooner or later we shall weep again.
There is no refuge from the teeming road
and the four walkers waiting to be God.

World was not built for dreams, my dear; the dreamer
cores his unsympathy to a navel of gold;
rides home at evening swathed about with clamour,
he in his inward starlight never seeing
commercial colours, or the nervous mould
that hangs their lightning round him. And so being
rapt from humanity, wakes not till their feet
press down his bones to raise up Regent Street.

So our delights will never be alone,
or straight and safe as the lark's tower of air;
familiar things will break it, strange look on
with fierce laugh of lynchers; and the sea
speak our end in mountains to the shore.
Oh if that future tears us, it will be
but bridal violence. For he loves you still
who leans and weeps upon the window-sill.

TERENCE TILLER.

WHEN IT IS FINISHED

The sun lowers at truce. All wars are finished now.
Empty, final, unconsumed, this horizon.
A soldier at the edge of it
stares at a rigid curve of light,
The glitter of his pipe fading.

Shadows of trees waver as gulls
waver over thorny seas, while on my hand
droop sly flowers of snow.
The hills are a crown of death.
We have all come to this valley.

Can a house be built up again. Must we notice
a limp, furtive wind like the flicker of pages
in an empty room, the way of strangers.

Time is past for those who gave us help
from the South. Fragments of sad khaki
captured by barbed-wire that grows out of dawn.

Is the sky nothing but an ironic face;
Questions never answered about our ruin,
our ruined houses, where horror is busy
about the beams fire did not ask for.

Watching crucial night gape slack,
light in treeless squares clot thick,
one living man must kill
successful armies of ghosts
who move about his acre like a cloud.

IAN FLETCHER.

PARIS, 1942

In every cafe they smoke and swear,
Swilling champagne and bad French beer;
They bribe the women with cigarettes,
And keep one hand on their bayonets.
And in every cafe that suits their will
FOR GERMANS ONLY is hung on the wall.

Along the boulevard, the park, the pub.,
The cinema, theatre, the gay night-club,
Wherever the field-grey dares to haunt,
Cabaret, dancehall and restaurant,
Wherever the jackboot dares to fall
FOR GERMANS ONLY is hung on the wall.

For the swastika sign with its white, red, black,
Has often led to a stab in the back.
The storm-troopers' badge has been sought in vain,
And the field-grey floats down the sullen Seine.
The Fascists prefer to be safe and lonely,
And they label the city FOR GERMANS ONLY.

But one day the General slopes down the street
And the soldiers follow on wary feet,
And on every lamp-post that is in sight
FOR GERMANS ONLY is painted white,
On every lamp-post exclusive space
Where the swastika'd rats can swing in their place.

The General bellows, the soldiers falter
And every collar seems tight as a halter,
For whoever they torture, however they rave,
The city will still be a conqueror's grave.
The people of Paris have plainly spoken—
The Fascist neck shall be bent and broken.

HONOR ARUNDEL.

THE SIRENS

Odysseus heard the sirens; they were singing
Music by Wolf and Weinberger and Morley
About a region where the swans go winging,
Vines are in colour, girls are growing surely

Into nubility, and pylons bringing
Leisure and power to farms that live securely
Without a landlord. Still, his eyes were stinging
With salt and seablink, and the ropes hurt sorely.

Odysseus saw the sirens; they were charming,
Blonde, with snub breasts and little neat posteriors,
But could not take his mind off the alarming

Weather report, his mutineers in irons,
The radio failing; it was bloody serious;
In twenty minutes he forgot the sirens.

JOHN MANIFOLD.

BOLGERRAN AT THE BARBER'S

Bolgerran's the boy,
With his head in a bald owleye sobriety
Singed with his seventh day shave
Into a crop.

Last childhood lisping
Layer of pricking blondeness on his pond-peaceful
Brain that dozes within its daily dozens
There, in the cellar-wide.

Pride of tiles at the barber's
That harbours a harem-full
Of menfolk in the quite
White femininity of aprons and cruppers of turn-ups

Frayed over diamond socks
As they lift brisk in their friskiness.

One has a best poetical bow-tie
That tickles the rim of his double chin
With its butterfly tips
As he clicks

Off a snippet of someone's churlish
Curls. But Bolgerran's the prime
Embellishment this time
With his pot-belly girlishly

Pranked out for the full view
Of the swivel mirror that blurs as it sees him
Asleep. There, no dreamtroops seize him,
No hand stoops to throw him

Over the steep of a hill,
All's steady and staidly static, stuffed-coat still.

Now, jerk him to. He's singed
And saucer-cheeked with his shave, the prominence,
Of his ears refreshed from the straggles
Of hair that has suffered

The scissors' dominance.
Give him his coat that's turning old—
And if one may make so bold,
It's two bob up your shirt,

Bolgerran—snob
He's given a jingling tip
With a paw that says it's really much more
Than the job's worth,

It should be enough to give
My whiskers a clip for the social thrill.

Go on, give him his scarf
That's falling in half, and put a bit more on the bill.

LAWRENCE LITTLE.

CHESSMAN ASSOCIATIONS

Idly scratching his name with a diamond ring
Across the woolly pane our Shelley sings :
Enough to keep breast of heiress burning.

Wordsworth, late pilgrim, stands on the bridge, ponders.
As trio pour wishes into pebbly Dee, wonder
" Were the Ladies ladies ? " by lakeside and under.

Far from the all bordering metaphysic
Smart Hebrew scholars reason for bee tunics,
Their souls elevated by cathedral music.

More risky sprees faint back through milky tramways—
Rimbaud and Charlevilled, Savage in goal, rays always ;

Landor lays £70,000 on dreams and estate.
Our modern monk bothered at " forehead " couldn't sweat.

KEIDRYCH RHYS.

THE ALIEN WORLD

O ! I was tense and loving then
When the whole wild grief of autumn swept
And put again her likeness on the rack of memories.
I was taut with fear that summer evening,
Numb as a plate of glass, dead as a cigarette stub,
As fingering the last letter, I stepped into the vacant future,
Knowing no other life or impulse or desire,
Clutching no other future than the sunlight on her hair.
Then, for a long dull moment, time ran cold
While rain swished on the indifferent city,
And the ghost of war sidled through the empty streets.
So now, fearing as then for each new future,
I hear the traffic lurch, the windows shiver,
The hurt dogs whine, the brakes pull short
And now, as then, the fast world tense with reeling
Spins to a stop and leaves me undefended
Against the septic agony of wondering how-and-when
Sitting and flicking the parchments idly,
I hear the whole wild grief of autumn weeping,
Weeping for lost summers beyond the lost horizons,
Weeping with torture of this alien world.

ROBERT GREACEN.

D. H. LAWRENCE

DION BYNGHAM

" CONSCIENCE is sun-awareness and our deep instinct not to go against the sun." Although dead over ten years now, David Herbert Lawrence can still speak for himself. And what is so stirring about his *Pansies* poems, and his last war letters, for instance, is the naked honesty and directness with which they speak. These words come from and get to the marrow. There is not an iota of humbug about them. Never are they what the man thought he ought to say, or felt it would be " nice " to say, but always what he *had* to say. Sham, to Lawrence, seemed the only thing to be ashamed of.

Pansies suggests prettiness perhaps, among other things, to some. These pithy utterances are never merely that. Some of them are whimsical, tender, even wistful; some good-humoured and gay. Others are sardonic and stinging—scorpionic—or even petulant and almost peevish. Some are noble, some tragic and resigned. Others are serene in sunny peace. Like a clear pool or lake, now ruffled by the wind or whipped by driving rain, now rippled by a stone that someone has flung in, now reflecting a lightning flash from leaden skies, now shimmering and sparkling under the noonday sun, now still and silent, mirroring the starry night—so are these verses. Sometimes the lake is frozen over with wintry ice. Yet always there is that primal touch of element to element, through night and day. Elemental is the word.

Take that definition of conscience, for instance. There may be more academic and pedantic dictionary-definitions. Was there ever a truer *intuitive* one? Like Richard Jefferies in his *Story of My Heart*, Lawrence is under the imperative urge to " Begin wholly afresh. Go straight to the sun, the immense forces of the universe, to the Entity unknown; go higher than a god; deeper than prayer; and open a new day." The most piteous thing that both Seers perceived about the mass of

people was that, driven daily by a multitude of petty cares and compulsions, they were " unconscious of the sun."

" I love the sun in any man," writes Lawrence, " when I see it between his brows clear, and fearless, even if tiny. . . . I feel that when people have gone utterly sunless they should cease to exist. The middle classes," he adds, " are sunless. They have only two measures : mankind and money, they have utterly no reference to the sun." Conscience being sun-awareness, " it is only immoral to be dead-alive, sun-extinct, and busy putting out the sun in other people." From which it naturally follows that :—

" Men should group themselves into a new order
of sun-men.
Each one turning his breast straight to the sun of suns
in the centre of things,
and from his own little inward sun
nodding to the great one.
And receiving from the great one
His strength and his promptings,
and refusing the pettifogging promptings of human
weakness.
And walking each in his own sun-glory
with bright legs and uncringing buttocks."

Such a vision is truly timeless and for all time. Have not most authentic worships been solar of origin, germinating from sun-wonder ; material and spiritual significances alike finding their fusion in that golden flower of living flame ? Sol and soul are in essence one and the same ; even as to language similarly derived. The inner light and the outer : are they, perhaps, simply one ? That sun-seed of light which blossoms from the womb of diffused radiant darkness is the same source of being, in the universe, in the atom, in ourselves. From that primal impulse we receive our promptings, to act from and with which is life and joy, to deny which is woe and death. Acting awarely

with nature's law of cause-and-effect, we should find nature friendly and gracious. Flouting it, we depart from all peace and sanity and happiness, wasting our substance and ourselves in strife.

Perhaps in sodden and sunless lands and seasons it is harder to realise this sun-begottenness of ours, that we are all sons of the sun, bits of the sun that have wandered across the ages. Summers are fleeting and reminders too few. Lawrence himself trekked south by inevitable solar attraction, and to mornings in Mexico. Yet our ancient forebears who built Stonehenge and Avebury took care to foster this sun-awareness even here. We might do worse than revive it for ourselves. It might be the start of our return towards valuing the right things, according worth or worship to the right things; putting first things first. Sun and soul, life and body, blood and soil before riches and raiment; living intelligence, health and beauty before money, prestige, power and all the foolish and futile things men fret and fight over throughout their poor drab little lives.

To value the right things, indeed, is the first pre-condition and open secret of all true wealth, happiness, peace. It makes all the difference in every detail of our days, what we ultimately believe about things. On that depend all plans and policies, individual or social, economic, reconstructive. Value wrongly, falsely, and all mere technical intelligence and skill are made worse than useless. By valuing wrongly we have got where we are, benighted in blackout. The perceptive penetration of Lawrence was, alas! not typical of our time. With all our cleverness, we did not know where we were going or what we were doing. We were too much immersed in the muddle we had made, too deep in to get out. Lawrence saw right through the Mammon-worship, the money-obsession, which are the madness of our epoch. He called us to awaken, to escape into sanity, into life. We have not listened yet—and we reap the consequences. Some day, perhaps, enough of us will listen and respond. Perhaps too many books have been written and read

of late years. They have allowed us too little time to attend to the best that we had.

So Lawrence does reflect our state, only too poignantly, still. Money and machines have become our gods. We have lost our soul, our religious sense, our reverence for life. This he would give us back, in fuller measure than we ever had it. He would provoke us (not preach us) into a new revolutionary religion of Life—life bodily incarnate, on earth, here and now. He would reveal this resurrection. While we leave that out of our reckoning, nothing else, perhaps, can cure our crazy war-fever—the nemesis of our money-madness and power-mania, our snobbery and lust for petty privilege. Well should we ponder these words of his that never mince nor pretend. When they are bitter they *are* bitter; when melancholy they *are* melancholy; when scoffing they *are* scoffing. All the more are they cheerful and sunny and convincing in their radiant splendour when that side has its say.

How necessary are these contraries and contrasts, these high-lights and deep shadows, after all, and how absurd to try to suppress them from our daily lives! Some are born optimists, some achieve optimism, some (especially nowadays) have optimism thrust upon them. To imprison people for expressing despondency is about the shallowest psychology of which one has ever heard. He smiles best (and perhaps laughs last) who is not afraid to weep or to frown. Are the ill *really* any better for affirming that all is well? In the words of Lawrence: "And when I think of the great tragedy of our material-mechanical civilization crushing out the natural life, then sometimes I feel defeated; and then again I know that my shabby little defeat would do neither me any good nor anybody else."

Still, Lawrence was no defeatist. From that sun-soul of light-in-darkness within him, he would fain believe in the ultimate victory of Life. What he would have said about things now, heaven knows. His letters during the last war show how he hoped against hope, hoped amidst despair, that

a living resurrection might come after that. By the time he wrote *Pansies* he had seen that hope fade. Of must that afflicts us to-day in " the death of our era " he is prophetic—as William Blake, Carlyle and Ruskin were before him. Perhaps it is not difficult to be a prophet—even with half an eye—in the country of the blind. Lawrence had more than half an eye.

The world is full of glib and shallow creeds, paltry and platitudinous precepts, and plausible prescriptions—for foolish, vulgar and shallow people. Lawrence had no truck with these. What he does give generously, nevertheless, is a living flow of integral grace and goodness—if you want it, if you can take it. This adulation of Lawrence may, perhaps, seem uncritical. Rather it is that what is most critical in other directions gives here its assent. If what you criticise you find Lawrence criticising tenfold, little is left but to appreciate, to agree and give thanks. As he had the first word, so much he have the last:

" The only thing to be done, now,
now that the waves of our undoing have begun to strike on us,
is to contain ourselves.

To keep still, and let the wreckage of ourselves go,
let everything go, as the wave smashes us,
yet keep still, and hold
the tiny grain of something that no wave can wash away,
not even the most massive wave of destiny.

Among all the smashed debris of myself
keep quiet, and wait.
For the word is Resurrection.
And even the sea of seas will have to give up its dead."

ALDOUS HUXLEY

D. S. SAVAGE

To say that Mr. Aldous Huxley was one of the most accomplished novelists of the inter-war period would be to state a commonplace. That he has been a significant figure, a focus for thought and feeling, his wide audience proves. In his earlier days Mr. Huxley was read enthusiastically by many of his contemporaries, not only in England, who felt that he spoke for a generation. His books expressed the sophisticated hedonism, the " disillusionment " of the post-War period. He was detached, ironical, and he knew how to be amusing with that wryness which revealed an awareness of the corruption at the bottom of the glass of pleasure—an awareness which spiced his work and helped to distinguish it from simple amusements of the Ronald Firbank kind.

This awareness, also, was a sign of Mr. Huxley's fundamental seriousness. In this sense, the germ of *Eyeless in Gaza* was already present beneath the flippancies of *Antic Hay*. This quality made it impossible for Mr. Huxley long to gloss over the enigma of human existence and made necessary the movement towards the formulation of a valid attitude towards life which is discoverable in the progression of his work from *Crome Yellow* through *Eyeless in Gaza* to his latest novel, *After Many a Summer*.

The interior drama discoverable in Huxley's work is a significant one. It resolves into a dialogue between two contrary impulses—between the acceptance and the rejection, of human responsibility, the responsibility of being a human person understood in its fullest sense and implying responsibility for others, as opposed to the irresponsible view of human life as an irrational phenomenon, a bad joke about which nothing relevant can be done. This inward dialectic that runs like a thread through Huxley's work becomes fully explicit at intervals, but it is also expressed indirectly and unconsciously

in the successive and coeval creation of "sympathetic" or "real" characters (real, that is, capable of change through inward struggle, capable of destiny), and of puppets, grotesques, "flat" characters immobilised in a static convention. One of the reasons for Mr. Huxley's achievement as a novelist is his remarkable power of projecting separate and distinct aspect of his personality into the creation of his fictional characters. The family likeness running through the physiognomy of his various characters is very marked. But the characters, his puppets, endowed with more or less reality as their creator's sympathy moves towards or away from them, alternate with the appearance upon the scene of the Huxley character proper, the character who in the novelist Philip Quarles, of *Point Counter Point*, and Anthony Beavis, of *Eyeless in Gaza*, is an obvious self-portrayal of his author. Thus it is evident that we are dealing with the work of a writer somewhat unusually isolated from human contacts, even were not this very quality a distinguishing mark of the "autobiographical" character when he appears. But this enclosing of the novelist's horizons, while it prevents him from achieving the varied human richness of the great imaginative novel, through his impotence to penetrate sympathetically into the inward experience of other persons, yet through its very effect of isolation accentuates the interior, personal drama which is worked out through the sequence of novels. Mr. Huxley's performance, then, is very much of a one-man show, and the logic that runs through it is singularly uncomplicated.

This inward dialectic manifests itself as follows: in the earlier novels the "real" or "round" character was present only in germ. Later, the germ expanded until the resultant "real" character took the centre of the stage and became the source and focus of the action. This was Mr. Huxley grappling hand to hand with his central and underlying problem, the result of which was an undeniable increase of depth in his work. The complete process is fully worked out in the most directly personal of all Huxley's books, *Eyeless in Gaza*. (Then, in

After Many a Summer, the inward process is objectified in a didactic formula through the monologues of Mr. Propter.) But the central character of *Eyeless in Gaza* achieves his highest degree of self-realization only, by a process of self-immolation whose results are not made fully explicit until the later novel, to abdicate his position and his humanity and surrender the stage to the puppets. In this latest novel, therefore, we have something that resembles a return to the earlier Huxley. There is all the suavity, the glitter, the dexterous technical accomplishment of the entertainer. But there is the difference—that the potentiality of interior development has been removed. The dialect exhausted, Mr. Huxley the novelist having come full circle, the moralist appears fully fledged with the doctrines he has abstracted from the living process.

In the earlier works, *Crome Yellow* and *Antic Hay*, the possibility of development was implicit, if concealed, in the two central characters of the respective books. Gumbril, in *Antic Hay*, is an older, more sophisticated version of the Denis who appears in the first novel (and in the early tale *A Country Walk*). He is partly a caricature, yet recognisably human. For instance, he has a social conscience, he is distressed at the contrast of his comparative affluence with the downtrodden poverty of the man and woman in the scene at the coffee stall. In Gumbril there is the possibility of pathos, if not of tragedy. He actually passes through a moral crisis when he is forced to choose between a genuine affection for a woman (Emily) who cares for him, and a spurious one for a woman (Myra Viveash) who does not. The serio-comic manner of its presentation is intended to take some of the sting out of the betrayal, but it is real and pathetic nevertheless. The theme of betrayal recurs in *Eyeless in Gaza*—the betrayal of love to lust.

In *Those Barren Leaves*, in some respects Mr. Huxley's most harmonious and satisfying work, there is an increase in seriousness, flippancy disappears and there is evidence of a maturer grasp of the novelist's material. But the author's attitude to his creatures is still detached, he is still deploying them from

the outside. But already the future overt moralist was taking shape in the weary man-of-the-world Calamy, who towards the end of the book, leaving the pointless social life at the preposterous Mrs. Aldwinkle's, retires for a period of solitary contemplation to a hut on the mountain.

Point Counter Point, which followed it, is an interesting novel, but a very slipshod one. It is of transitional interest as marking the emergence of the central human character, the autobiographical portrayal. The disunity of the book results from the unsuccessful attempt to reconcile the puppet-world with the world of real human beings which is beginning to take shape around Philip Quarles. The effect is to diminish the brilliance of the puppet-show while at the same time giving a puppet-like quality to the would-be human characters. Almost certainly Rampion, Huxley's idealised portrait of D. H. Lawrence, with his quality of intense "livingness," was intended as a "round" figure, but the result approaches more nearly to sentimentalised caricature.

Nevertheless, the introduction of Philip Quarles necessitates a more responsible approach than was possible hitherto, for in as much as he is a representation of his author he cannot well be relegated to the two-dimensioned world of the puppet-dance. It is no longer the futility of existence that concerns Mr. Huxley, but the futility of Philip Quarles, of himself. He is finding it impossible any longer to stand aside.

Brave New World, which still carries the impression of the influence of D. H. Lawrence, does not fit neatly into the sequence. It is possible to consider it, from the purely psychological aspect, as a symbolical projection of the conflict between the ways of response to life presented by Philip Quarles and by Rampion in the preceding novel. The Savage, who is almost a pure Lawrence character (in spite of the fact that he bears no resemblance to any of Lawrence's own creations) with his religio-poetic style of life, is brought into contact with, and opposition to, the puppet-universe of the future, dominated by the demands of technology and the

materialistic doctrine of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, in which spiritual freedom and human dignity have been annihilated. With the suicide of the Savage, a pessimistic conclusion to the conflict, Mr. Huxley seems to have eliminated the Lawrence toxin from his bloodstream, for in *Eyeless in Gaza* the autobiographical hero is able to emerge undistorted and fully fledged.

This novel, which is of central significance in the sequence, is written along four chronologically distinct planes of narrative, to present scenes from every relevant section of his forty-three years old hero's experience. It is the story of Anthony Beavis's escape from his too-inhuman detachment from human existence and from personal relationships and his discovery of an ethical principle and a way of life. Anthony undergoes a species of religious conversion through the discovery that he truly loves the woman whom he had hitherto been using as a mere vehicle for his sensuality. Unfortunately, he makes the discovery too late. He pursues her throughout the relevant pages of the book, but there is no satisfactory consummation of the affair. Instead, rather mysteriously, his love becomes etherealised into an abstract beneficence for humanity, a recognition of the claims of human (or rather social) responsibility, and he becomes converted to a kind of Yogi-pacifism.

We may note in passing that love, as distinct from sexuality, plays hardly any part in Huxley's previous work. Love presumes communion, but as we know, Huxley's is a one-man universe and the absence of communion is one of the central qualities of his autobiographical character when he appears. In this case, Anthony Beavis's discovery of love is allied in an explicable manner with horror at the degeneration through the years of a former mistress, once a brilliant and attractive woman, and now a dope-addict, a drunkard, a malicious, dishonest and squalid wreck. Although we are never fully convinced of Anthony's love for Helen, his disgust and loathing for the degrading effects of licentious and egocentric living as

evinced in Helen's mother is only too apparent. Manifestly, he has a horror of imprisoning himself in the hell in which exist Beppo Bowles and Mary Amberley, whom he actually compares to the damned, unable to liberate themselves from their base sub-human condition. His urge to salvation is prompted negatively rather than positively.

The problem of salvation he approaches impersonally, and as it were technically. There is even something a little distressing about his methodical exercises in detachment and self-control, which springs from the will rather than from the heart. If Anthony achieves " liberation " it can only be at the cost of all human richness and plenitude of experience. For this reason, *Eyeless in Gaza* is at bottom a deeply depressing book.

One of the Aldous Huxley's main preoccupations as a novelist is with the less savoury aspects of the male-female relationship. This we should expect in a world where there is no love. A certain licentiousness, ranging from the " normal " to the sadistic and perverted is the hall-mark of almost any typical Huxley character, and it is of course largely, in the realm of sensual-erotic gratification that the hedonists of the earlier novels are immersed. Mr. Huxley's bedroom scenes are prominent enough to have given him something of a reputation as a highbrow pornographer—a reputation shared, oddly enough, with D. H. Lawrence, although in their attitude to sexuality the two writers have little in common but their basic puritanism. Parallel with this goes his encyclopaedic display of learning, while references to and descriptions of works of art form a considerable part of the scenic background of the novels. Thirdly, there are the musings and speculations of the scientist upon the habits of ants or infusoria—which is as near as Huxley ever gets to Nature.

We leave Anthony, in *Eyeless in Gaza*, musing after this fashion: " Some way, Anthony was thinking, of getting beyond the books, beyond the perfumed and resilient flesh of women, beyond fear and sloth, beyond the painful but secretly

flattering vision of the world as menagerie and asylum. . . ." *After Many a Summer* simply marks the later stage of this revulsion and reveals its nature more explicitly. In this novel a significant change occurs. The central human figure, at grips with his destiny, has dropped out. Therefore, the dimension of depth given by the focusing of the action around a human destiny disappears and the novel reverts to the two-dimensional puppet-stage where we are presented once more with a brilliant, satirical portrayal of futility jerking the strings. Where the reader might conceivably have looked for an increase in unity and power, there is in fact a return to the manner of the earlier novels. The puppets dance with no less idiocy than in the early works. Indeed, they are more grimly futile, the nausea and staleness they reveal being more apparent. And instead of the whole novel being illuminated with the author's inward understanding, manifesting itself through the characters and revealing their source of reality, the moral element (it is hardly possible to call it religious, it approaches nearer to the didactic) is isolated into what is hardly more than a running commentary on the text. Mr. Propter, that walking embodiment of the Huxley theories of detachment and enlightenment, is himself curiously detached from the body of the action. This kindly philosopher, whom the author is at pains to represent in the most favourable light as a kind of exalted Mr. Sensible, living, appropriately, on the outskirts of the millionaire Jo Stoyte's Californian estate, in his little house with its gadget for converting solar energy to run an electric generator, its electric mill and its looms " at which he had learnt and was now teaching others to weave," is strictly irrelevant to the plot, contributing little but long monologues.

The puppet characters in the book, the flute-voiced litterateur Jeremy Pordage, the ruthlessly scientific-minded sensualist Dr. Obispo, and the withdrawn, practical-contemplative Mr. Propter, are all distinctive inhabitants of the Huxley universe. Can we doubt that they are all genuine fictional projections of Mr. Huxley's many-faceted personality?

But the element of caricature has ingrained itself much more deeply into them than into any of the characters of the earlier novels. They are hardly human at all. Their cardboard grimaces are immutable, fixed, and their situation merely farcical. On the other hand we are given Pordage, Obispo, Jo Stoyte (how typically Huxleyan even in their nomenclature !), and, in opposition to these, exhorting them to salvation, Mr. Propter. But Mr. Propter himself is overshadowed by his doctrine. As a character he can have no sympathetic interest for us. His doctrine has eliminated the necessity for conflict. Therefore he contains no dramatic possibilities.

Mr. Propter, in fact, for all his monologues upon the impossibility of achieving good on the strictly human level and the necessity for establishing contact with Eternity, is a singularly futile figure. Pete, who must have been introduced largely to provide a mute audience for the loquacity of Mr. Propter—the naive and idealistic communist Pete, upon whom the monologues seem to be taking effect in turning his mind from the level of politics and erotic desire to the " level of Eternity," is killed off. Pordage and Propter dropping out, we are left with Jo Stoyte, Obispo—and the fifth Earl. And the book closes to the satirical laughter of Dr. Obispo contemplating the final degradation of sensual man, the futility of human existence " on the strictly human level," as symbolised by the simian figure of the eighteenth century Earl of Gonister surviving into the twentieth century in his stinking underground cavern.

Now, criticism of the novel, particularly in this place and time, cannot be confined to the aesthetic. Where morality enters into the work, providing, even, the main theme of that work, the critical evaluation must be a moral as well as an aesthetic one. Through the work of fiction, when it attempts more than entertainment, there is a communion between writer and reader in which the writer, searching for meaning in the chiaroscuro of private experience, communicates the resultant pattern to the reader, who may then make use of this pattern

to discover some aspect of his own personal meaning. In this sense, Literature is scriptural.

Assuming the organic character of Mr. Huxley's creations, and entering into the role of the psychologist, we can only draw the conclusion that *After Many a Summer* is a representation of Mr. Huxley's inability to achieve an authentic integration of the elements, of his own personality of which are projections. Can this mysticism be accepted as valid when it turns away from life in order to operate in an impersonal vacuum? Life is evil, Mr. Huxley in effect says. Life can only contaminate. Only God is good. But the God of Mr. Huxley is so tenuous as to be almost synonymous with nothingness, while his Eternity is a region of colourless abstraction.

So far from achieving a unity, Mr. Huxley has thrust himself deeper into a precarious and sterile dualism. With his pre-occupation with the rarified regions of metaphysical speculation there has gone no corresponding diminution (in this last novel) of sensual-erotic interests. What is remarkable is that instead of the transfiguration of sex through mysticism there is an absolute severance between the two spheres of being. Mr. Huxley's preoccupation with sex is relegated to one compartment while his mysticism sits spectrally apart in another, and there is no commerce between them. Each can only exist in the absence of the other. In *After Many a Summer* the result emerges as an entire lack of balance between the two compartments.

> "Delicious creature! The hand that had lain inert, hitherto, upon her knee slowly contracted. Between the broad spatulate thumb and the strong fingers, what smoothness, what a sumptuous and substantial resilience! She would take him, and take him, what was more, on his own terms. No Romeo-and-Juliet acts, no nonsense about it. Love with a large L, none of that popular-song claptrap with its skies of blue, dreams come true, heaven with you. Just sensuality for its own sake. The real, essential concrete thing; no less, it went without saying, but also (and this

most certainly didn't go without saying; for the bitches were always trying to get you to stick them on pedestals, or be their soulmates), also no more. That is one compartment. Here is another. 'What is man?' he whispered to himself 'A nothingness surrounded by God, indigent and capable of God, filled with God if he so desires.' And what is God of which men are capable? Mr. Propter answered with the definition given by John Tauler in the first paragraph of his *Following of Christ*: 'God is a being withdrawn from creatures, a free power, a pure working.' Man, then, is as nothingness surrounded by, and indigent of, a being withdrawn from creatures, a nothingness capable of free power, filled with a pure working if he so desires."

It seems peculiarly fitting that, with such utter sensuality weighing down one end of the scale, the other should be lifted high into the airlessness of a peculiarly arid and abstract metaphysics: "Liberation from time," he said. "Liberation from craving and revulsions. Liberation from personality." Actualised good lies outside the prison, in timelessness, in the state of pure, disinterested consciousness."

Huxley's Mr. Propter sees existence as split up into three compartments, each segregated from the other. There is the animal level, on which the question of evil does not arise. There is the "strictly human level" on which only the accumulation of evil is possible. Lastly, there is the escape from all this into the abstract, neutral region of Eternity, the sphere of an impersonal, abstract, and ultimately (Mr. Huxley might be driven to admit) non-existent Deity.

The goal of Mr. Huxley's mysticism is an escape from life, a renunciation of the responsibilities of his human destiny. Through the series of his novels, so representative, in some ways, of the experience of a certain type of modern man, he has passed on from a juvenile nihilism to an adult realisation of the necessity for accepting responsibility, with a final solution of his dilemma in a reversion to absolute nihilism, an irrevocable shelving of responsibility sanctified by a self-bound

and sterile religiosity. It is no wonder that the more intelligent reviewers, when the work appeared, saw in it Mr. Huxley's petition in intellectual bankruptcy.

As entertainment, of a rather savage kind, *After Many a Summer* has its good points. Scripturally, all that can be said is that it cannot help us. And aesthetically

It would seem that as a novelist, Mr. Huxley has reached a dead end. His career in some ways resembles that of Tolstoi. Even more strikingly does it resemble that of the nineteenth century novelist, Laurence Oliphant, with whom, as to character and background, he has much more in common. Are we to expect Mr. Huxley to give up novel-writing and turn to the composition of ethical tracts? That would seem feasible. For the novel's province is human life, human experience, and its interior significance. The thinness one is made aware of when re-reading Aldous Huxley's novels results from his failure to discover the variety and fullness of experience. There comes a time when we lose our interest in puppets, however cleverly they are galvanised into action. Huxley's rejection of the value and significance of *personality* (which is perfectly explicit) offers no promise for future achievement in the sphere of fictional creation. When human life is seen as lacking inherent significance, and value is denied to the personal for the exaltation of an unreal and static impersonalism, it will hardly seem worth the writer's while to continue to portray human life, character, behaviour. In fact, the novelist's occupation will have disappeared. With it will have disappeared much else which is of even greater value.

GRAHAM GREENE

ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL

HUMAN lives tend to be repetitious attempts to solve problems set in infancy. The terms of the nursery, teat, potty and lead cannon, are abandoned for adult symbols, the pipe, the bank balance and the Bren gun. But the form of the emotional struggle remains infantile. The ability or the disability, the "bent" of the man, has been shaped years before he learns the conjugation of "amo" or that work is prayer.

In no man is this plainer than in the imaginative worker. Plumber or platelayer, welder or joiner, has material to work, with little choice of alternative. But poet and novelist lift from experience images to fit a fantasy excited most by outside events, which chime with the unconscious. Even the greatest writers repeat metaphors, characters, and plots which are mere variations of a central theme. Dostoyevski, for example, rings changes on the "pure harlot," Natasha, Sonya, Grushenka.

The novelist, who sets himself the task of portraying and interpreting the life of his time, is hampered by personal predilections as much as by limitation of experience. His eye is not the impartial lens of a camera; and his brain is more sensitive to some tints of experience than of others. The world, willy-nilly, becomes a personal world, bearing a certain resemblance to external reality, yet changed like an image in a mirror.

Few living English novelists derive more material from the daily newspaper than Graham Greene; yet even fewer reduce everything to so uniform a vision. The setting may be London or Liberia, Stockholm, Brighton or Tabasco. But they are all in Greeneland. The main character may be a drunken, adulterous priest, as in *The Power and the Glory*, a boy murderer, as in *Brighton Rock*, a hare-lipped gunman, as in *Gun for Sale*, or the pseudo-Harrovian cad of *England Made Me*. They are accurately observed. They speak their own language, usually. They have their convincing histories. Yet they are the same breed, Greenelanders. They are like a collection of sepia photographs.

Yes, they are seen in sepia, a world observed through sunglasses. But they have more in common than the tint of the observer's glass. They are declassed for one thing. Either, like Minty and Anthony Farrant in *England Made Me*, they have fallen in the world. They look with envy on the prosperous, conventioned middle class, where they would fit but for some, usually adolescent, lapse. They know more, they have suffered more; but knowledge is evil, suffering is like lemon juice to an oyster. Or, like Rose Cullen, from boredom, or Anne, the chorus girl, from a sense of justice higher than social justice, they have abandoned their class, still afraid, but rather excited. Or rise, like the boy in *Brighton Rock*, Conrad Drover in *It's a Battlefield*, Ivar Krogh in *England Made Me*, they have risen from one class without being absorbed into another.

Greenelanders are homeless men, pining for domesticity, the kettle on the hob, warmth, security, love or tenderness, an end of all hate and struggle. Yet for a number of reasons this is impossible. Andrews is fleeing from fellow-smugglers and betrays them for lust instead of love. Conrad Drover loves his condemned brother's wife, but kills his love and the chance of domestic happiness by going to bed with her. The hare-lipped gunman has never dared to love, but when the police are after him for murder, he trusts a woman and is betrayed. Farrant, divided between love for his sister and lust for floosies, can always get a job because he's quick with figures, and never keeps it, because his fingers are as quick. *The Confidential Agent* must perform his mission. The drunken priest, persecuted by Red Shirts, must minister to his flock. Only the boy in *Brighton Rock* has no hankering for quietude, no vision of carpet slippers on a hearthrug. But the girl has, whom he marries to cover his crime.

In 1935, Greene made a journey through Sierra Leone and Liberia. It was a horrifying experience in itself; rats, fever, disease, discomfort and ignorance. The novelist, like one of his characters, went beyond the boundaries of his known society. But it was also the symbol of a return to childhood. (" Hell lies about us in our infancy.") When he returned, he

wrote: "One was back, or, if you will, one had advanced again, to the seedy level. This journey, if it had done nothing else, had reinforced a sense of disappointment with what man had made out of the primitive, what he had made out of childhood. Oh, one wanted to protest, one doesn't believe, of course, in 'the visionary gleam,' in the trailing glory, but there was something in that early terror and the bareness of one's needs, a harp strumming behind a hut, a witch on the nursery landing, a handful of kola nuts, a masked dancer, the poisoned flowers. The sense of taste was finer, the sense of pleasure keener, the sense of terror deeper and purer. It isn't a gain to have turned the witch or the masked secret dancer, the sense of supernatural evil, into the small human viciousness of the thin distinguished military grey head in Kensington Gardens with the soft lips and the eye which dwelt with dull lustre on girls and boys of a certain age.

"He was an old Etonian. He had an estate in the Highlands. He said: 'Do they cane at your school?' looking out over the wide flat grass, the nursemaids and the children, with furtive alertness. He said: "You must come up and stay with me in Scotland. Do you know of any girls' schools where they still—you know——" He began to make confidences and then, suddenly taking a grip of the poor sliding brain, he rose and moved away with stiff military back, the old Etonian tie, the iron-grey hair, a bachelor belonging to the right clubs, over the green plain among the nursemaids and the babies wetting their napkins." (*Journey without Maps*, page 264.)

"The seedy level!" That is the location of Greeneland. The sadist and the masochist, the impotent athlete, the incestuous brother and sister, the coward, the braggart, the man with the tie, the hare-lip, the spy-maniac, the torturer of spiders and the collector of small foreign coins, the diseased dentist in a foreign port, the one-legged military man managing a road-house, the rich Jew despised by aristocrats, the bullied chambermaid in an all-night hotel, the Major ordering whores by telephone ('a pig in a poke'), the lawyer who married

beneath him lusting after typists who pass his window, the adulterous butler; they are as different, if not as chalk from cheese, at least as spurs from rubber drawers; but they are all seedy, the ingloriously vicious.

"The first thing I can remember at all was a dead dog at the bottom of my pram. . . . Another fact was the man who rushed out of a cottage near the canal bridge and into the next house; he had a knife in his hand; people ran after him shouting; he wanted to kill himself.

"Like a revelation, when I was fourteen, I realised the pleasure of cruelty; I wasn't interested any longer in walks on commons, in playing cricket on the beach. There was a girl lodging close by I wanted to do things to; I loitered outside the door hoping to see her. I didn't do anything about it, I wasn't old enough, but I was happy; I could think about pain as something desirable and not as something dreaded. It was as if I had discovered that the way to enjoy life was to appreciate pain." (*Journey without Maps*, page 30.)

Nostalgia for childhood commonly takes the form of desiring to return to the state of irresponsibility, and happiness. But Greene desiderates the age when terror was really terrible and evil; not the furtive Etonian in the gardens, but Satan, and almost glorious. To most adults, the departure of fear is pride of maturity; but to Greene, it is the fading of a cherished vision. Greene is most objective, least morbid in sketches of childhood. *The Basement Room. The End of the Party. I Spy.*

"Hatred demands allegiance." In pursuit of the seedy, he tries to recapture the horror of childhood in adult terms, at the same time that he is showing up its shabbiness. The elaboration of a subtle imagination creates a world as harsh, treacherous, violent and cowardly to the adult mind, as the witch on the nursery landing was to the child. The heightened image, the acceleration of nature, the dynamic-static comparison ('The sympathy didn't belong; it could be peeled off his eyes like an auction ticket from an ancient flint instrument'), the sharp cutting of sentences, the emphasis on decay, deformity, and the

bizarre make real a nightmare for the duration of reading.

"In the great public-school grounds above the sea the girls trooped solemnly out to hockey; stout goalkeepers padded like armadillos; captains discussing tactics with their lieutenants; junior girls running amok in the bright day. Beyond the aristocratic turf, through the wrought-iron main gates they could see the plebian procession (going to the races), those whom the 'buses wouldn't hold plodding up the Down, kicking up the dust, eating buns out of paper bags. The 'buses took the long way round through Kemp Town, but up the steep hill came the crammed taxicabs—a seat for anyone at ninepence a time—a Packard for the members' enclosure, old Morrises, strange high cars with family parties, keeping the road after twenty years. It was as if the whole road moved upwards like an underground staircase in the dusty sunlight, a creaking, shouting, jostling crowd of cars moving with it. The junior girls took to their heels like ponies racing on the turf, feeling the excitement going on outside, as if this were a day on which life for many people reached a kind of climax. The odds on Black Boy had shortened. . . ." (*Brighton Rock*, page 142.) It is brilliant, the combination of speed with humour, observed fact with the fresh image (armadillo, amok, aristocratic, ponies), the skilful transitions, antitheses, anticipations. And yet. . . .

Finishing any book by Greene, whether a travel-book, novel or "entertainment" (potboiler to you), I have felt "Brilliant! And yet" I want to analyse two of the reasons for "And yet. . . ." Greene is a Catholic and I do not believe in, like or admire the Catholic Church. But this is not the reason for disagreement. In *The Lawless Road*, he writes: "And so faith came to one—shapelessly, without dogma, a presence above a croquet lawn, something associated with violence, cruelty, evil across the way.* One began to believe in heaven *because one believed in hell, but for a long while it was hell only one*

*Greene went to a school of which his father was headmaster. Weekends he could creep into his home, weekdays he was a boarder.

could picture with a certain intimacy—the pitchpine partitions in dormitories where everybody was never quiet at the same time; lavatories without locks; "There, by the reason of the great number of the damned, the prisoners are heaped together in their awful prison. . . ." walks in pairs up the metroland roads, no solitude anywhere, at any time. The Anglican Church could not supply the same intimate symbols for heaven; only a big brass eagle, an organ voluntary, "Lord dismiss us with thy blessing," the quiet croquet lawn where one had no business, the rabbit and the distant music."

The passage which I have italicised contains my dissatisfaction. Greene believes even now more strongly in evil than in goodness. Scatological references abound in his work. The sexual act is always portrayed as degrading (with the possible exception of two people copulating in a crowded Mexican prison amid excrement). Greenelanders have no joy, gaiety, humour or playfulness. They do not think profoundly, nor act constructively. Whenever Greene portrays a man of constructive action, he fails. Ivan Krogh, in *England Made Me*, never comes alive. The numerous communists who appear in Greene's work (and he is as fascinated by communists as he is ignorant of their organization, discipline and aims) are either Greenelanders such as Surrogate and Conder in *It's a Battlefield*, or ideological "humours," such as the Captain of Police in *The Power and the Glory*. There is much action in Greeneland, but it is the swift and scattered action of a game of hide-and-seek.

My first "and yet" is not confined to the falsity of a similar mood. The falsity goes even deeper in the novels, as opposed to the "entertainments." Analysis of *Brighton Rock* will show what I mean. The plot of *Brighton Rock* is that "the Boy," who is leader of a bookmakers' protection racket, murders a hanger-on of a rival gang in revenge for the murder of his old boss, and to cover his tracks is led to meet and then marry a pathetic little waitress, who might give evidence against him. A cheery sort of Wife of Bath who was with the murdered man just before he was done in isn't satisfied with the coroner's

verdict and finally lays bare the crime. This plot, modelled on the Brighton race gangs of a few years back, is material for a good straightforward realistic melodrama.

But Greene is concerned with a philosophical theme, the contrast between human right and wrong, and divine good and evil. The Boy is a Catholic. *Corruptio optimi pessima.* His wrongdoing has a dimension of sin, which his unbelieving associates do not share. "*Credo in unum Satanum,*" he states. The waitress, Rose, also a Catholic, consciously commits mortal sin, because she loves the Boy. With her eyes open, she goes to Eternal Damnation. Ida, the jovial detective, doesn't believe in that sort of stuff. But she does believe in Right, Wrong, and Justice being done.

All three are recognisable characters at the beginning of the book. But by the end, the conflict between their own natures and the philosophic purposes for which the author is using them has torn them to pieces. They should be laid bare, but they are laid out.

The same falsity is apparent in *The Man Within*, where a very improbable vamp is introduced into a Lewes inn in order to seduce the hero into doing his duty and justify the philosophic pattern.

My second "and yet" is that with the exception of *England Made Me* and *It's a Battlefield* (still in many ways his best novel), all his novels and entertainments have the same formula, the hunted man. Though he has expended tremendous care on the construction of sentences, diversity of incident, and originality of setting, he has been content with the same method of precipitating character. The pursuit element (Kate pursuing Anthony, Conrad Drover the Commissioner of Police) enters into even the two novels mentioned as exceptions. The new novel, *The Power and the Glory*, is about a hunted priest.

When Greene went to Tobasco, he was told that the last victim of Garrido's clerical persecution was a "whiskey" priest, who survived for years in the swamp and jungle, administering the sacrament until he was caught and shot. The theme combined religion and the hunted man. *The Power and the Glory* is the result.

I find it difficult to assess this novel purely as a work of imagination, because I know Mexico, and the Mexican Indian is not a true Greenelander. So when the priest, returning to a village, where his daughter by an Indian woman lives, finds the child at the age of six tittering with precocious sexuality and obscenely exposing herself to her father, my certainty that this is untrue of an Indian village child makes it hard for me to judge the validity of the suspicion that the incident is as wrong aesthetically as it is factually.

Leaving reality aside, however, I find the book unsatisfying because the nature of the theme is in violent conflict with its treatment. The novel moves at the same time too fast and too slow; there is too much action—the game of hide-and-seek—and too little development. An epic theme, which should slowly have gathered speed and power, has been treated as a thriller. The reader moves so fast—from character to character and event to event—(the author's first attempt to deal with a long passage of time)—that the total effect is dissipated in the confusion of detail. If incidents had been simplified and give greater weight, the priest's open-eyed return to martyrdom would have been inevitable. As it is, the swift, nervy tempo of the writing makes it capricious.

To conceive *The Power and the Glory* in its proper form demanded a poet's imagination. Greene has the imagination of a poet, but it is directed to smaller things than plot, the the image, the setting, the word. His conception of plot has been a mixture of satire and pathos. He is preoccupied with the anti-climax, the seediness of the old Etonian in the gardens after the epic terror of the witch on the nursery landing. In the past, he has got away with it,—and the anti-climax is the easiest literary device to practise, because your characters can't answer back when you let them down. But in *The Power and the Glory* he chose a theme too ambitious for the anti-climatic technique. If he is to continue along this course, he will have to enlarge the territory of Greeneland and get it a more variable climate.

I

R. M. RILKE

DALLAS KENMARE

" Who, if I cried, would hear me among the angelic orders? "

It is fitting that this line should open the Elegies which have proved to be Rilke's greatest work (*Duino Elegies*, Hogarth Press, 7s. 6d.) It embodies, as single lines of great poetry have a way of doing, a whole universe of human and super-human experience. Rilke, sharing the common fate of poets and prophets, had long cried to a deaf human world, and what assurance had he that the beings of the divine world heard him? Now, fifteen years after his death, he is acclaimed as the greatest of modern poets, and for some time a handful of sympathetic commentators have been working to spread his difficult " message," but the magnitude of Rilke is not yet measured, possibly partly because we are still too near to see him in perspective, but still more because the world at this point in history seems less than ever ready to accept a message so poignantly human yet in its deepest implications so overpoweringly super-human. For Rilke the human was inevitably and inextricably rooted in the super-human; there was no understanding of one without the other, which is why to such thinkers the desecration of human life is always the ultimate blasphemy.

How deeply Rilke looked into the mind, how penetratingly he pondered on the mysteries of human nature and the meaning of evil is revealed largely in the semi-autobiographical work, *The Note-books of Malte Laurids Brigge*. His life in Paris had shown him a new and hitherto totally unknown and unimagined world, and he was profoundly shocked and distressed. The sordid, the painful, the hideous, seemed to him predominant in the city; he was apparently curiously blind to its light-winged beauties, or it may be that those beauties in themselves accentuated the contrasting horrors in the poet's

acutely sensitive mind. At all events, he became passionately concerned to redeem those horrors. His compassion for the poor, the oppressed and the diseased, took, however, a different direction from Tolstoy's; he made no attempt to live and work among the people he so deeply pities; he was first and last a poet, whose methods are necessarily less direct and immediate than those of the reformer. The poet is always too intuitively and acutely aware of the complexities of every human problem to place much trust in the many systems and plans offered as infallible panaceas by the kindly but too often short-sighted and superficial social reformer. This is not, of course, to suggest the possibility of any charge of myopy against Tolstoy, who was a titanic genius and a prophet of the new, and possibly still very far distant, age, but it must be recognised that there is a fundamental difference in the psychological constitution of the poet and any other literary artist, for reasons which Rilke himself well understood and ceaselessly proclaimed, but which the majority almost passionately reject, refusing to admit a difference in kind, not degree, between not only the artist and the "ordinary" man, but also between artists themselves. It remains true, however, that it is not easy for a poet and a novelist fundamentally to understand each other, nor for the novelist and the critic; in each case the mind derives from a different source, works at a different level and is composed of different material. This is really a commonplace of enlightened psychology, and the refusal to accept the deep fundamental differences in human beings probably arises at bottom from an unconscious desire to reject the irrefutable metaphysical fact of individual isolation, which destroys the sense of security without which life, save for the staunchest, is almost unendurable. Tolstoy was not a poet, although he was a great writer, and his approach to human problems would therefore necessarily differ fundamentally from the approach of the pure poet. Although Rilke wrote prose also, he was not temperamentally, a prose-writer, but always a poet. His protest against human ills and iniquities took the inevitable

poet's form; the passionate appeal to the heart; he portrayed the evils with unflinching honesty, and in this ruthlessly truthful portrayal tacitly cried: "Look at this! Is it endurable? Consider, and remedy it." Endowed with unique gifts—the capacity for intense feeling, vivid imagination and vital expression—the poet serves humanity in his own way, by stirring the heart to pity and the desire for assuaging action; and he should not, as Rilke knew, attempt any other way.

Rilke was aware that he belonged to a different order of beings. Such facts are readily accepted by occultists, but in a materialistic age it is wiser not to mention them. An age which has created for itself a merely ethical Christ, whose ideas, though admirable in their way, must never be attempted in practice, since they would lead to anarchy, cannot be expected to accept beings who deviate in a marked degree from generally-acknowledged standards. Even the negroes knew better when they affirmed that "all God's children got wings!" The modern world denies both wings and Divine paternity. It is therefore logically impossible for special messengers of the Lord to appear from time to time. Even Professor Butler, in her extremely enlightened study of Rilke (*Rainer Maria Rilke*, Cambridge Press, 21s.) refuses to commit herself on this controversial question, and clearly finds the "worship" of any great poet amusing and unnecessary, Those misguided friends of Rilke's (usually, of course, women), who recognised his true nature are subjected to gentle but quite undeniable mockery. Unfortunately the prevalent attempt is always, not to raise the "common man" to the level of the genius (were it possible), but by some means to reduce the genius to the level of the common man—which after all is quite in accord with another contemporary tendency, in spite of sixty years or so of Socialism; not so much to raise the standard of living among the poor as to reduce the living standard of the well-to-do. Which is the logical result of a non-Christian Socialism, based on class-hatred instead of love. The ideal of Christianity, conversely, is concerned with perfec-

tion (which ideal it shares with the artist). Modern thought derides any such ideal, dismissing the idealist as an escapist and perfectionist. The convinced and thorough-going Christian, however, has not forgotten Jesus's behest, "Be ye perfect," nor his assurance that "with God all things are possible," and insists that Jesus was the supreme realist. It is precisely because humanity has rejected the "perfectionist" ideal, accepting instead the far easier doctrine of the second-best that we at the present time find ourselves involved in not merely the second-best but easily the by far worst. Still more pernicious is the kindred doctrine of approximation and relative values, which denies the possibility of an absolute good, and affirms the inevitability in this world of the choice of two evils. For a detailed exposition of this doctrine we must turn primarily to the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr, though there are a number of theologians who conform to the same school of thought. If not infrequently happens that laymen (for example, that great Christian and fine writer, Baron von Hügel), and artists are nearer the essential truths of religion than the theologians.

Rilke, although he never overcame his curious resistance to Christianity, and was never able to accept Christ, wrote much of God, and was constantly preoccupied with angels. He was careful, however, to explain that the angels of his imagination had no connection with those of the Christian hierarchy. His resistance to Christianity has a certain kinship with Nietzsche's, and is probably just as unreal, as Shelley's was also. Rilke shared other qualities with Nietzsche: both felt that they were "possessed" by a spirit more powerful than themselves, and were therefore constrained to attempt to transgress human boundaries. Such are inevitably intolerant of orthodoxy or restraint, and would be likely to see in Christianity a possible fettering of their biographical introduction to Rilke's *Requiem* makes clear that "Rilke had much sympathy with the lonely and suffering Christ, but he had no sympathy whatever with the conceptions of mediation and

atonement. The mediator, he thought, merely got in between people and God, prevented them from finding God in the world, encouraged them to neglect the world and its glory for the sake of some imaginary heaven." But everywhere throughout his work Rilke expressed in innumerable forms his conviction of the omnipresence of God and the essential divinity of the world. He would doubtless have said had he been willing to make a plain statement on the subject—which is unlikely—that art was his religion, and certainly no artist has ever advanced and maintained so uncompromising a philosophy of art and the artist's function. It may be a hopeful sign that at the present time interest in Rilke is growing, for never has there been a graver need for a renaissance, a new understanding of the true significance of art, its essentially religious basis, and the part it can and must play in the re-integration of a ruined world. Not until Rilke's own passionate belief in the divine significance of art is accepted can there be hope of a permanent recovery from the ills which have been creeping like fungus over civilisation since the advent of the Machine Age. But the world cannot be expected to take art seriously until art takes itself seriously, and this cannot happen until individual artists affirm the reality of their unique vocation. The ideal of perfection, common to the artist and the Christian, must no longer be dismissed as chimerical.

Rilke is a poet of the new age, and the coming of the new age depends largely on the role artists are prepared to play, He himself allowed no claims to stand in the way. As Professor Butler remarks: "The word formidable exactly describes Rilke's genius, which no one, not even Rilke, could enslave for long; which the war could not deflect from its course and against which matrimonial, paternal, economic and social claims were powerless." His solution to the problem of marriage and parenthood seems to have been exactly suited to his own unique needs, and would probably prove satisfactory to artists as a whole. But a measure of Rilkean

courage and integrity is essential for the experiment. After a bare eighteen months of communal living, he and his wife, who was a talented sculptor, agreed that they were quite ready to live apart if the claims of their work demanded it. They recognised their mutual work as pre-eminently important in their lives, and thereafter never again lived under the same roof, although they saw each other frequently, and remained on terms of close friendship and deep affection for the remainder of Rilke's lifetime—twenty-six years. Rilke had no specifically paternal feelings for their daughter, Ruth, although he maintained an affectionate interest in her throughout. He understood, and lived by, the truth promulgated more than two thousand years ago by Plato, but which has not yet been accepted; that for the creative artist the usual ways of creation are superfluous and even undesirable. These intense convictions caused him great suffering when his friend, Paula Modersohn-Becker, a painter of unusual genius, died in childbirth, for he saw the ultimate meaning of her death as an act of vengeance of the god she had denied—the god of art—in her attempt to achieve a unity between the woman and the artist in her. Her death was the tragic answer; women of genius should not attempt this dual creativeness. Were they completely honest with themselves, and aware of their unique vocation, they would know that for them the normal woman's role of motherhood is unnecessary. Paula Becker's marriage had not been happy; she had married a man quite incapable of understanding, or sympathising with, her genius, and after two or three years she left him and returned to her work, but pressure was too strong she was too uncertain of her own value, and eventually returned to her husband and bore a child. It was natural that Rilke should see all this as a betrayal: of art, of love, and of the sacred laws of creation, for there is no deeper betrayal of love than the loveless marriage, no deeper betrayal of life than the birth of a child not for love but for expediency. In his strange and wonderful poem, "Requiem for a Friend," the

poet expressed his convictions in beautiful, unearthly words and most deeply and concisely perhaps in the lines :—

> " you pulled the lovely woof out of the loom
> and wove your threads into another pattern."

That was sin : to be untrue to the pattern.

But Rilke, the poet of a new age, saw too clearly ; in common with all great poets, too prophetically. He understood and lived by laws mankind cannot yet assimilate, but they will have to be learned, if humanity is to survive. We know little or nothing yet of the laws of love, of creation, and with these laws are inbound all the tragedies and glories of human life.

T. S. ELIOT

GEORGE ORWELL

THERE is very little in Eliot's later work that makes any deep impression on me. That is a confession of something lacking in myself, but it is not as it may appear at first sight, a reason for simply shutting up and saying no more, since the change in my own reaction probably points to some external change which is worth investigating.

I know a respectable quantity of Eliot's earlier work by heart. I did not sit down and learn it, it simply stuck in my mind as any passage of verse is liable to do when it has really rung the bell. Sometimes after only one reading it is possible to remember the whole of a poem of, say, twenty or thirty lines, the act of memory being partly an act of reconstruction. But as for these three latest poems, I suppose I have read each of them two or three times since they were published, and how much do I verbally remember? "Time and the bell have buried the day," "At the still point of the turning world," "The vast waters of the petrel and the porpoise," and bits of the passage beginning "O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark." (I don't count "In my end is my beginning," which is a quotation.) That is about all that sticks in my head of its own accord. Now one cannot take this as proving that *Burnt Norton* and the rest are worse than the more memorable early poems, and one might even take it as proving the contrary, since it is arguable that that which lodges itself most easily in the mind is the obvious and even the vulgar. But it is clear that something has departed, some kind of current has been switched off, the later verse does not *contain* the earlier, even if it is claimed as an improvement upon it. I think one is justified in explaining this by a deterioration in Mr. Eliot's subject-matter. Before going any further, here are a couple of extracts, just near enough to one another in meaning

to be comparable. The first is the concluding passage of *The Dry Salvages :*

> And right action is freedom
> From past and future also.
> For most of us this is the aim
> Never here to be realised ;
> Who are only undefeated
> Because we have gone on trying ;
> We, content at the last
> If our temporal reversion nourish
> (Not too far from the yew-tree)
> The life of significant soil.

Here is an extract from a much earlier poem :

> Daffodil bulbs instead of balls
> Stared from the sockets of his eyes !
> He knew how thought clings round dead limbs
> Tightening its lusts and luxuries ;
>
> He knew the anguish of the marrow,
> The ague of the skeleton :
> No contact possible to flesh
> Allayed the fever of the bone.

The two passages will bear comparison since they both deal with the same subject, namely death. The first of them follows upon a longer passage in which it is explained, first of all, that scientific research is all nonsense, a childish superstition on the same level as fortune-telling, and then that the only people ever likely to reach an understanding of the universe are saints, the rest of us being reduced to " hints and guesses." The keynote of the closing passage is " resignation." There is a " meaning " in life and also in death ; unfortunately we don't know what it is, but the fact that it exists should be a comfort to us as we push up the crocuses, or whatever it is that grows under the yew trees in country

churchyards. But now look at the other two stanzas I have quoted. Though fathered on to somebody else, they probably express what Mr. Eliot himself felt about death at that time, at least in certain moods. They are not voicing resignation. On the contrary, they are voicing the pagan attitude towards death, the belief in the next world as a shadowy place full of thin, squeaking ghosts, envious of the living, the belief that however bad life may be, death is worse. This conception of death seems to have been general in antiquity, and in a sense it is general now. " The anguish of the marrow, the ague of the skeleton," Horace's famous ode, *Eheu fugaces*, and Bloom's unuttered thoughts during Paddy Dignam's funeral, are all very much of a muchness. So long as man regards himself as an individual, his attitude towards death must be one of simple resentment. And however unsatisfactory this may be if it is intensely felt it is more likely to produce good literature than a religious faith which is not really *felt* at all, but merely accepted against the emotional grain. So far as they can be compared, the two passages I have quoted seem to me to bear this out. I do not think it is questionable that the second of them is superior as verse, and also more intense in feeling in spite of a tinge of burlesque.

What are these three poems, *Burnt Norton* and the rest " about ? " It is not so easy to say what they are about, but what they appear on the surface to be about is certain localities in England and America with which Mr. Eliot has ancestral connections. Mixed up with this is a rather gloomy musing upon the nature and purpose of life, with the rather indefinite conclusion I have mentioned above. Life has a " meaning " but it is not a meaning one feels inclined to grow lyrical about ; there is faith, but not much hope, and certainly no enthusiasm. Now the subject-matter of Mr. Eliot's early poems was very different from this. They were not hopeful, but neither were they depressed or depressing. If one wants to deal in antitheses, one might say that the later poems express a melancholy faith, and the earlier ones a growing despair. They were

based on the dilemma of modern man, who despairs of life, and does not want to be dead, and on top of this they expressed the horror of an over-civilized intellectual confronted with the ugliness and spiritual emptiness of the machine age. Instead of " not too far from the yew-tree " the keynote was " weeping, weeping, multitudes," or perhaps " the broken finger-nails of dirty hands." Naturally these poems were denounced as " decadent " when they first appeared, the attacks only being called off when it was perceived that Eliot's political and social tendencies were reactionary. There was however, a sense in which the charge of " decadence " could be justified. Clearly these poems were an end-product, the last gasp of a cultural tradition, poems which spoke only for the cultivated third-generation rentier, for people able to feel and criticise but no longer able to act. E. M. Forster praised *Prufrock* on its first appearance because " it sang of people who were ineffectual and weak " and because it was " innocent of public spirit " (this was during the other war, when public spirit was a good deal more rampant than it is now). The qualities by which any society which is to last longer than a generation actually has to be sustained—industry, courage, patriotism, frugality, philoprogenitiveness—obviously could not find any place in Eliot's early poems. There was only room for rentier values, the values of people too civilised to work, fight or even reproduce themselves. But that was the price that had to be paid, at any rate at that time, for writing a poem worth reading. The mood of lassitude, irony, disbelief, disgust, and not the sort of beefy enthusiasm demanded by Squires and Herberts, was that sensitive people actually felt. It is fashionable to say that in verse only the words count and the " meaning " is irrelevant, but in fact every poem contains a prose-meaning, and when the poem is any good it is a meaning which the poet urgently wishes to express. All art is to some extent propaganda. *Prufrock* is an expression of futility, but it is also a poem of wonderful vitality and power, culminating in a sort of rocket-burst in the closing stanzas :

" I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown,
Till human voices wake us, and we drown."

There is nothing like that in the later poems, although the rentier despair on which these lines are founded has been consciously dropped.

But the trouble is that conscious futility is something only for the young. One cannot go on " despairing of life " into a ripe old age. One cannot go on and on being decently " decadent," since decadence means falling and one can only be said to be falling if one is going to reach the bottom reasonably soon. Sooner or later one is obliged to adopt a positive attitude towards life and society. It would be putting it too crudely to say that every poet in our time must either die young, enter the Catholic Church, or join the Communist Party, but in fact the escape from the consciousness of futility is along those general lines. There are other deaths besides physical death, and there are other sects and creeds besides the Catholic Church and the Communist Party, but it remains true that after a certain age one must either stop writing or dedicate oneself to some purpose not wholly aesthetic. Such a dedication necessarily means a break with the past :

" Every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
Undisciplined squads of emotion."

Eliot's escape from individualism was into the Church, the Anglican Church as it happened. One ought not to assume that the gloomy Pétainism to which he now appears to have given himself over was the unavoidable result of his conversion. The Anglo-Catholic movement does not impose any political "line" on its followers, and a reactionary or austro-fascist tendency had always been apparent in his work, especially his prose writings. In theory it is still possible to be an orthodox religious believer without being intellectually crippled in the process; but it is far from easy, and in practice books by orthodox believers usually show the same cramped, blinkered outlook as books by orthodox Stalinists or others who are mentally unfree. The reason is that the Christian churches still demand assent to doctrines which no one seriously believes in. The most obvious case is the immortality of the soul. The various "proofs" of personal immortality which can be advanced by Christian apologists are psychologically of no importance; what matters, psychologically, is that hardly anyone nowadays *feels* himself to be immortal. The next world may be in some sense "believed in" but it has not anywhere near the same actuality in people's minds as it had a few centuries ago. Compare for instance the gloomy mumblings of these three poems with *Jerusalem My Happy Home;* the comparison is not altogether pointless. In the second case you have a man to whom the next world is as real as this one. It is true that his vision of it is incredibly vulgar—a choir practice in a jeweller's shop—but he believes in what he is saying and his belief gives vitality to his words. In the other case you have a man who does not really *feel* his faith, but merely assents to it for complex reasons. It does not in itself give him any fresh literary impulse. At a certain stage he feels the need for a "purpose," and he wants a "purpose" which is reactionary and not progressive; the immediately available refuge is the Church, which demands intellectual absurdities of its members; so his work becomes a continuous nibbling round those absurdities, an attempt to

make them acceptable to himself. The Church has not now any living imagery, any new vocabulary to offer:

> "The rest
> Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action."

Perhaps what we need is prayer, observance, etc., but you do not make a line of poetry by stringing those words together. Mr. Eliot speaks also of:

> "the intolerable wrestle
> With words and meanings. The poetry does not matter."

I do not know, but I should imagine that the struggle with meanings would have loomed smaller, and the poetry would have seemed to matter more, if he could have found his way to some creed which did not start off by forcing one to believe the incredible.

There is no saying whether Mr. Eliot's development could have been much other than it has been. All writers who are any good develop throughout life, and the general direction of their development is determined. It is absurd to attack Eliot, as some left-wing critics have done, for being a "reactionary" and to imagine that he might have used his gifts in the cause of democracy and Socialism. Obviously a scepticism about democracy and a disbelief in "progress" are an integral part of him; without them he could not have written a line of his works. But it is arguable that he would have done better to go much further in the direction implied in his famous "Anglo-Catholic and Royalist" declaration. He could not have developed into a Socialist, but he might have developed into the last apologist of aristocracy.

Neither feudalism nor indeed Fascism is necessarily deadly to poets, though both are to prose-writers. The thing that is really deadly to both is Conservatism of the half-hearted modern kind.

It is at least imaginable that if Eliot had followed wholeheartedly the anti-democratic, anti-perfectionist strain in himself he might have struck a new vein comparable to his earlier one. But the negative, Pétainism which turns its eyes to the past, accepts defeat, writes off early happiness as impossible, mumbles about prayer and repentance and thinks it a spiritual advance to see life as " a pattern of living worms in the guts of the women of Canterbury "—that, surely, is the least hopeful road a poet could take.

THE END

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following short details about contemporary British little reviews are printed in order to give the reader some background knowledge of this interesting field of publications.

ADELPHI. This is one of the oldest little reviews, and is edited by John Middleton Murry, the critic and philosopher. Many years ago it was primarily a literary magazine, but towards the outbreak of war, and particularly since war began, more and more space has been given to general articles, expounding the pacifist and humanitarian outlook for which the paper stands. At the same time, there is a considerable book review section, and a number of poems and an occasional story are published, together with occasional literary surveys, such as one on Irish fiction, by Ethel Mannin. Contributors have included, in addition to Murry, J. Hampden Jackson, the late Max Plowman, Richard Ward, Bruce Bain, Donald Cowie, Richard Murry and Bill Grindlay. Price 1s. 6d., from Lodge Farm, Thelnetham, Via Diss, Suffolk.

BELL. This monthly literary magazine, which aims " to let Irish life speak for itself," was launched soon after the outbreak of the war. Under the mature editorship of Sean O'Faolain, one of the few first-rank older Irish writers still resident in Eire, it is doing much to focus and direct a quiet revival of creative writing, particularly among new writers, which now seems to be taking place in both South and Northern Ireland. In addition to stories and poems, the magazine prints regular informed articles and criticisms on Irish drama, education, village crafts, musical festivals, etc. Frank O'Connor, John Hewitt, Geoffrey Taylor, Roy McFadden, W. R. Rodgers, Bryan MacMahon and Michael O'Beirne are among regular contributors. Price 1s. 6d., from 43, Parkgate Street, Dublin, Eire.

DECACHORD. One of the oldest-established of poetry papers, the *Decachord* is now published bi-monthly " in the interests of living poets and their readers." Edited by the poetess, Philippa Hole, the magazine publishes a type of traditional and lyrical poetry which does not receive so much attention in many newer reviews. Price 1s., from 31, Brick Street, London, W.1.

HORIZON. Edited by Cyril Connolly, literary editor of the *Observer*, this is a monthly magazine which specialises in publishing long analytical and critical studies of various aspects of the arts—literature, music, painting, and so on. Since its inception in January, 1940, it has maintained an exceptionally high standard of writing, both in regard to these articles and to the occasional short stories and poems published. For this reason the tendency is to print mostly established and mature writers; nevertheless, *Horizon* has introduced such important new writers as J. Maclaren-Ross, W. R. Rodgers, Philip Toynbee, Adam Drinan, Diana Gardner and William Sansom. For policy, *Horizon* " exists to provide good writing, to present expert or unusual points of view, to maintain an open forum and try to be detached and impartial."

Special features of *Horizon* have been a number of political-ethical articles seeking to point a way towards a reconciliation between the artist's point of view and the Leftish political outlook—and some unusually penetrating studies of literary and publishing trends, viz., George Orwell's study of "Boys' Magazines." Price 1s. 6d., from 6, Selwyn House, Lansdowne Terrace, London, W.C.1.

INDIAN WRITING. Launched in the Spring of 1940, this is a quarterly collection of stories, sketches, articles and reviews, contributed mostly by Indian writers living at present in Britain (though a number of translations of works by writers in India are published). Edited by an editorial board comprising Iqbal Singh, Ahmed Ali, K. S. Shelvankar and A. Subramaniam, the magazine represents a strong Indian nationalist point of view. This has its most interesting reflection in stories and sketches, which are of a good average standard and give glimpses of the immense promise of Indian literature. Regular contributors, in addition to the four editors, include Mulk Raj Anand, S. Raja Ratnam and Krishan Menon. Price 1s., from The Bibliophile, 16, Little Russell Street, London, W.C.1.

KINGDOM COME. Started as a literary magazine in Oxford University, under the editorship of the poet, John Waller, this has since been taken over and is now edited by Alan Rook, Stefan Schimanski and Henry Treece. The emphasis of *Kingdom Come* is on the integrity of the artist and of the individual, and developing on these lines it endeavours to represent, very largely, the outlook of the group of writers known as the Apocalyptics—among the best known of them being Henry Treece, J. F. Hendry, Nicholas Moore and G. S. Fraser. In addition to a large number of poems, and a few stories and sketches, *Kingdom Come* has published a symposium on "Art and Democracy" and a number of articles on art. A special feature is made of book reviews. Price 1s. 6d., from 32, Sedgecombe Avenue, Kenton, Middlesex.

LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY. This is one of the oldest-established papers among present-day reviews, and has also incorporated the old *London Mercury* since just before the outbreak of war. Edited by Robert Herring, the magazine makes regular features of book reviews and literary articles, and regularly prints stories and poetry by younger writers. Quite often it devotes practically the whole of one issue to a particular subject, and in this way has presented some interesting writing on India, the R.A.F., the Apocalyptic movement, etc. Its stories are often interesting samples of different national cultures, i.e., Welsh, Irish, Scottish, Indian, etc., Price 1s., from 26, Maiden Lane, London, W.C.2.

NEW VISION. Started just before the outbreak of war, this is a quarterly literary-educational magazine representing the pacifist outlook, and edited by Geoffrey Pittock-Buss, a well-known pacifist writer and speaker. Contents are mostly articles on literature, philosophy, pacificsm, education, etc., but occasionally short stories and poetry are published. Also small book reviews. Regular contributors include Vera Brittain, Ethel Mannin, Reginald Reynolds, Patrick Wilson, Howard Kent, Ian Fletcher, D. S. Savage and Cyril Hughes. Price 9d., from 47, Argyle Square, London, W.C.1.

NOW. This is another literary quarterly magazine which takes a definite anti-war stand, and is of particular interest as it publishes some of the best known pacifist poets and writers, including Nicholas Moore, George Woodcock, D. S. Savage, Herbert Read and Alexander Comfort. Recently *Now* has been taken over by Freedom Press, official publishers of anarchist literature in Britain, and the paper now endeavours to present the anarchist interpretation of art and literature. Stories and poems are published, but the bulk of contents are analytical articles on various aspects of culture. Price 1s. 6d., from 27, Belsize Road, London, N.W.6.

OASIS. Intended as the domestic literary quarterly publication of a group of members of an Army Bomb Disposal Unit, this has nevertheless achieved a certain amount of public sales, and has from time to time published some promising new writers. There is no set policy, other than that of publishing good literature; contents include lengthy book reviews and critical studies, stories and a large number of poems. Regular contributors include Keith Vaughan, Derek Stanford, John Bayliss, Geoffrey Cuming, Denis Henry, Vic Turner and John Bate, the editor. Price 9d., from 28, Stafford Road, Croydon, Surrey.

OPUS. This is a quarterly magazine aiming "to emphasise the importance of the individual" and publishing creative work by a wide variety of individualist writers. Since its inception, soon after the outbreak of war, it has printed a series of interpretative studies of various fields of culture, also special factual articles on health, education, village crafts, sociology, etc. A large amount of space is also given to short stories, sketches, and poetry, mainly by new writers. The magazine is edited by Denys Val Baker, editor of the *Little Reviews Anthology*. Price 9d., from Wood House, Cholesbury Road, Wigginton, Tring, Herts.

OUR TIME. Formerly known as *Poetry and the People*, this is a monthly magazine presenting the Communist interpretation of art and literature. Its articles cover a wide field, including education, music, painting, and general entertainment, and are authoritatively written, from their particular standpoint. The magazine is edited by a board consisting of Beatrix Lehmann, Randall Swingler, Ben Frankel and John Banting, and among other prominent contributors are Mulk Raj Anand, Geoffrey Parsons, F. J. Brown, David Martin, and John Manifold. Price 6d., from 28-29, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2.

PENGUIN NEW WRITING. This is a development, in a cheaper form, of the impressive *New Writing* book-magazine introduced some years ago by Hogarth Press. *Penguin New Writing* is undoubtedly one of the most successful and significant of modern little reviews, and has a reputed sale of 75,000 copies, far greater than most of the other magazines mentioned here. Nevertheless, in character, it is essentially a little review, or literary magazine, and specialises, as the name implies, in publishing new writing. Special feature is made of works by European, Asiatic and other overseas writers. Bulk of contributions are short stories, but increasing space has recently been given to special studies of music, art, literature, etc. A few poems are also included in each issue. Among new writers who have been given prominence in *Penguin New Writing* are Sid Chaplin, Fred Urquhart, Dylan Thomas, Robert

Pagan, Walter Allen, Inez Holden, Laurie Lee, Lawrence Little, Terence Tiller and Keith Vaughan. The editor is John Lehmann. Price 9d., from Penguin Books, Ltd., Harmondsworth, Middlesex.

POETRY (LONDON). This is probably the most ambitious literary quarterly magazine, devoted exclusively to poetry, in Britain, and has built up a sale reputed to run into the region of seven or eight thousand copies per issue. Published quarterly, *Poetry (London)* is edited by Tambimuttu, and presents a wide variety of modern poetry, with particular attention given to work by Apocalyptic and surrealist poets. A long "Letter" on some aspect of poetry, a number of detailed poetry book reviews and a few prose-poetry pieces are additional features to the 50 or so poems published per issue. Price 2s., from 1 Craven House, Kingsway, London, W.C.1.

POETRY QUARTERLY. Published by the Grey Walls Press, a small progressive publishing house specialising in new poetry, this quarterly review prints many interesting new poets, particularly younger poets. It has been appearing for several years, since well before the outbreak of war, and is now edited by Wrey Gardiner, a well-known poet himself. Most of the space is given to poetry, but a number of reviews of new poetry books are printed at the end of each issue. Frequent contributors include Ian Serraillier, John Hall, Nicholas Moore, Robert Herring, Sean Jennett, Alex Comfort, Alan Rook, John Bayliss, and Robert Greacen. Price 1s. 6d., from Grey Walls Press, 4, Vernon Place, London, W.C.1.

POETRY REVIEW. This came into existence as long as 30 years ago and is the official bi-monthly journal of the Poetry Society which publishes it "not only for members but for general circulation, as a guide to what is best in poetry." Under the editorship of Galloway Kyle, general secretary of the Society, it represents a conservative outlook as compared with most other poetry magazines. A large amount of amateur poetry, by members of the Society, is published, but also some good modern poetry, mostly by older and more traditional poets, such as Edmund Blunden, Charles Morgan, Rostrevor Hamilton, Walter de la Mare, etc. At least half the space is given to lengthy reviews. Price 1s., from 33, Portman Square, London, W.1.

SCYTHE. Since the outbreak of war, this quarterly magazine has tended to give more and more space to the revival of agriculture and village crafts, etc., space being equally divided between these subjects and literary contributions. It is, however, primarily a literary paper, and publishes numerous critical studies, etc. No stories are published, but a great deal of poetry. The editor, Ronald Duncan, is a poet. Contributors have included Rolf Gardiner, Lawrence Olson, Norman Nicholson, Walter Roberts, Peter Wells, Robert Sergean, Nigel Spottiswoode. Price 2s., from West Mill, Moerwentstow, North Cornwall.

SEVEN. This quarterly magazine has had a varied career, and before the war a publication of this title was well-known as representing the Apocalyptic writers, such as Dylan Thomas and Henry Treece. Since early in the war, however, *Seven* has been published as "a magazine of people's writings," and has set out, very successfully, to build up a wide public sale, particularly

among members of the Forces. As it specialises in very short sketches and stories, interviews, etc., it probably publishes more items per issue than almost any other review. The general tone is Left-Wing. Contributors have included Sid Chaplin, David Boyce, David Martin, H. L. V. Fletcher, Roland Gant, James Mcfadden, Cyril Hughes. Editor is Sydney Treymayne, a poet. Price 1s., from 28-29, Southampton Street, London, W.C.2.

WALES. Although this magazine unfortunately had to stop publication soon after the beginning of the war, it is now being re-started, under the editorship of Keidrych Rhys, the Welsh poet. *Wales* has always specialised in printing new imaginative prose and poetry by Welsh writers, and can number many famous writers among its contributors, including Vernon Watkins, Alun Lewis, Kate Roberts, Davies Aberpennar, and Dylan Thomas. *Wales* is published by Keidrych Rhys, from Ty Gwyn, Llanybri, near Llanstephan, Carmarthen, South Wales.

WIND AND THE RAIN. This is a quarterly magazine edited by a board of four editors, Michael Allmand, Roland Brown, Neville Braybrooke and Terence Marke. Contents consist mainly of critical studies and book reviews, with a noticeable Catholic outlook, and occasional stories and poems are published. Recent issues have included such titles as "The Christian Tradition in French Literature," "Rainer Maria Rilke," "The Literature of New England," etc. Regular contributors include, in addition to the editors, Robin Atthill, Paul Foster, G. Wilson Knight, Christopher Hollis, Dallas Kenmare. Price 1s., from 15, Newton Court, London, S.W.8.

AIDE-de-CAMP'S LIBRARY

Accn. No.....

1. Books may be retained for a period not exceeding fifteen days.